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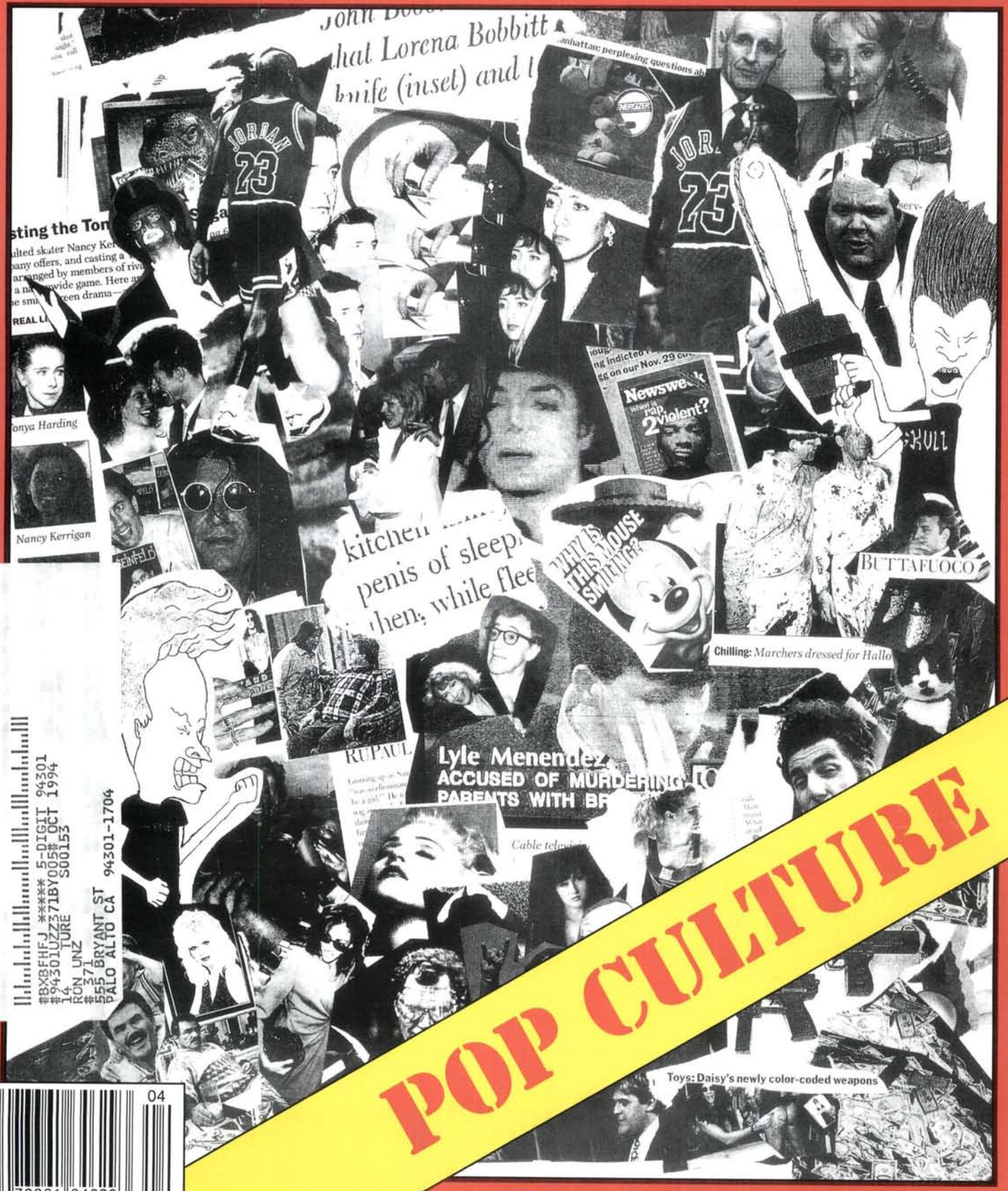

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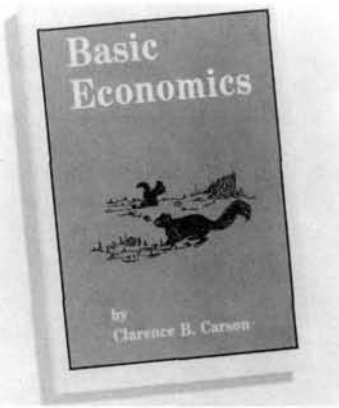

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Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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On Maya Angelou and Wake Forest University

John Meroney's article ("Maya Angelou's Inaugural Poem," December 1993) about my colleague here at Wake Forest University deserves serious attention. It reveals much about America's poet inaugurate, but, even more importantly, it probes into the bizarre reasons for the poem's popularity among the Clinton administration and its supporters in the world of education.

Angelou's poem is so lacking in poetic merit that one is forced to look elsewhere for reasons why it was received with such fulsome praise. To see why, one must look to the political pop culture that nourished it. If the poem was not plagiarized from Norton F. Tennille, Jr., it had to have grown from some similar plant flourishing in a new, Clintonesque soil. And, as Meroney notes, this is a soil quite different from the one that nourished John F. Kennedy and his choice of Robert Frost.

One thing stands out from Professor Angelou's convoluted exposition. It is that the past, even the immediate past, is ignoble and loathsome. One finds nothing in the way of old civil rights complaints about unjust schools or housing. The old standards no longer apply. They were put forth for profit, we are to understand, just as today's health care problems are said to result from profit-seeking by insurance and pharmaceutical companies. One can almost hear Karl Marx in the wings insisting that the real bogey is the capitalists and that what we need is an administration of things, not a politics of human beings. Or possibly one can hear Franklin Roosevelt with Adolf Berle insisting that the bogey is "corporate America."

A different picture of Angelou emerges from Wake Forest University's defense of its lifetime professor of American studies. She is known at Wake Forest as one who urges her students on to what her sponsor, President Thomas K. Hearn, Jr., has called "integrity." But in defending Angelou, Wake Forest is abandoning its rich church-sponsored tradition, not to mention the American tradition. Something new is meant by integrity as it is featured by Hearn.

Hearn rejects the idea of a universal standard by which to measure any moral goal. One can demonstrate integrity in defense of any number of majority or minority standards, or even in defense of standards applicable to family life, business contracts, and other such lesser associations. Integrity is a firmness in defense of whatever standards, even non-human ones, are portrayed as requiring self-sacrifice. And from Angelou's numerous autobiographies, we learn that such standards may be associated with any number of seamy callings: her books proudly celebrate her life as a single mother and her careers as a prostitute, burlesque stripper, and madam. In the words of those who have thought more clearly about these matters, the "moral" quality—integrity—is a "triumph of the will," or even a "will to power."

Here at Wake Forest, the traditional morality brought by so many students from home is challenged not by traditional Socratic wisdom but by courses that eclipse traditional learning. Indoctrination in cultural relativism is disguised as study to improve "understanding" of "diversity." There are also new courses in women's studies, homosexual literature, ethics and leadership. These obscure the traditional standards of morality contained in philosophic and biblical sources. They teach contempt for tradition and for those "profit-making" sources that are said to have sponsored it. The administration encourages a vague sense that all tradition before Freud was oppressive. The university's orthodoxy, its political correctness, indoctrinates students and reduces its "liberal education" to little more than hysterical brainwashing.

What remains stable for President Clinton and his educator friends like Hearn and Angelou is their contempt for the past and their dedication to a formless future, a future engineered by a vague new technology and described innocuously as "reinventing." Such politics go in the same sad direction that education has gone at Wake Forest. It promises a future contemptuous of the equality of men before "the laws of nature and of nature's God" and ever more strident in defense of its utopian vision.

—David Broyles
Professor of Political Philosophy
Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem, NC

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Recently, while looking through magazines at my local book superstore, I came across *Chronicles*. The first thing I noticed was John Meroney's piece alleging plagiarism by Maya Angelou. As an English teacher, I have more than a passing interest in plagiarism. Also as a teacher, I give poor grades when students do not support their arguments. In a magazine of national culture, I'd expect at least something to support Meroney's assertion that "the concept, structure, and central images [of Angelou's and Tennille's poems] are . . . quite similar."

It is interesting that *the* difference Meroney notes is that where Angelou's poem has trees, Tennille's trees have ropes wrapped around them. I can understand Angelou not using ropes around trees in a poem expressing hope for a new presidency. It is certainly true, however, that trees with ropes around an Outward Bound setting can convey positive images. But perhaps this is the point. Two people express ideas differently. Not having seen both poems, I can only respond here to what Meroney wrote (or what you included of his piece), and there is precious little of substance about the poems.

If Meroney's purpose is to prove plagiarism, the reader needs to see at least some support for his bland assertion of similarity. Instead of an account of his and Tennille's unsuccessful search for a response from Maya Angelou, her agents, and her acquaintances, his argument would be better served by a discussion of the text of the poems (or at least the parts allegedly plagiarized).

The response Meroney received from Angelou, Random House, et al., is the response a weak allegation of plagiarism deserves. As a lawyer, my response to someone who made a claim and then failed to prove it would be the same. Also, of what relevance is the size of Tennille's employer (which Meroney mentions twice)? Plenty of dopes work at large law firms.

—Arnold Schwartz
Media, PA

The Editors Reply:

Norton Tennille, Jr.'s résumé includes the following: J.D., *cum laude*, Harvard Law School (1968); Rhodes Scholarship, Balliol College, Oxford, B.A. (1965) and M.A. (1970) in politics, philosophy, and economics; M.A. in classical philology, Harvard University (1963); A.B. with highest honors in Latin, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1961). He has written for *Fortune*, been a foreign correspondent for *Time*, and held national posts with Outward Bound and the American Bar Association.

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

ELVIS is everywhere. But where two or more fans are gathered, devoted to his memory, weird manifestations are possible.

Some years ago I bought a pair of black leather pants in an after-Christmas sale, even though the fit was suspect. I found one dry cleaner in Roanoke, Virginia, where the seamstress willingly altered leather. As I stood balancing on the stool with the small woman at my seams, I heard her mumble something through pins that sounded like it contained the word "Elvis." As everyone knows, this word, along with "Jesus" and "Coke," is one of the best known English words in the world.

"What did you say?" I asked, without taking a breath. I did not want to disturb the line of pins taking shape from my hips to my ankles. In fact, I was probably obliged to hold my breath to achieve the desired effect. The black pants had to look poured on or they would prove a bad investment.

"I said I do all of the Elvis Lady's pants."

"Who's that?"

"Kim Epperly. The Elvis Lady. I thought you'd know her, with the leather and all that."

Believing me ripe for the pilgrimage, the seamstress gave me directions to a local shrine called Miniature Graceland. Built by Kim and her husband, Don Epperly, who suffers from MS yet still manages to construct detailed models, the exhibit now includes Elvis's childhood home, his father's home, the church he attended as a child, Heartbreak Hotel and Restaurant, Presley's Automobile Museum, as well as the Roanoke Civic Center, and, of course, Graceland.

A trip around the Epperlys' side yard, with Elvis singing in the background, begins at the Graceland model. Sometimes Elvis waves from the front steps, dressed in seasonal attire. On summer days, perhaps he wears a cleaned and pressed white coat over a fancy, ruffled shirt, blue slacks, and bow tie. But on my last visit, August 15, the 16th anniversary of his death, Elvis was not greeting the visitors, who brought candles by which to see their way.

Up the sloping yard, inside the Civic Center, Elvis perpetually sings to an audience of decked-out Barbie dolls. A television screen inside the car museum has played cosmic static every time I've toured, yet each time I find myself gravitating toward the screen's light show. I peer into the rolling disturbance of "snow" where anything or anyone might materialize. Even though his face would only be a projection, an illusion of presence, isn't this what it's all about? Over the whole of the Epperlys' creation, suspended on very noticeable wires, cruises Elvis's Lear jet. I know better, yet the jet creates an aura of anticipation.

You'll want to go there. Even former President Carter and Rosalynn have. No wonder. The Epperlys' construction project somehow overlaps with the Carters' inspired work on behalf of Habitat for Humanity. Miniature Graceland reminds us not so much of Elvis as of the human capacity for devotion, of how that devotion can materialize intent. I am convinced that if even one family

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poured as much energy into prayer for world peace, we'd probably have it. In the meantime, we can ponder the impact of Elvis.

—*Cathryn Hankla*

ELVIS IS ALIVE at a museum in Wright, Missouri. When I drive by a sign reading "He lives!" in rural America, I often have difficulty telling whether it refers to Jesus or Elvis, but in Wright a huge billboard assures motorists on Interstate 70 that the phrase refers to the one more influential in American popular culture, to the King of Rock rather than the Prince of Peace.

The Elvis Is Alive Museum and 50's Cafe bears much the same relationship to Graceland as a tent revival does to the Vatican. One is established, ornate, well-endowed, and orthodox; the other is new, slightly shabby, underfunded, and somewhat heretical. But just as evangelical fundamentalism burns with an enthusiasm that may have vanished from more sedate branches of Christianity, so Wright, Missouri, makes contributions to the Elvis cult not to be found in Memphis, Tennessee.

The most fundamental difference between the orthodox and heterodox followers of Elvis appears in their treatments of his alleged death. While Graceland has the "tomb" of Elvis, the museum claims the world's largest collection of clippings and photos of Elvis since his "disappearance" (a term considered by many more accurate than "death"). A running poll taken of all visitors to the museum has consistently remained two to one in favor of his still being alive.

Owner Bill Beeny has heard many reasons for Elvis's disappearance. In recent years, the theory that he was removed to a "safe house" by the FBI or DEA after receiving death threats for his undercover work apprehending drug dealers has overtaken in popularity the one claiming that he was working with the CIA against a communist conspiracy. Hypotheses concerning his abduction by UFOs or the Mafia are also common.

My favorite theory is that he had a huge contract with Weight Watchers to blimp out for "before" pictures, then disappear, lose the weight for "after" pictures, and reappear on TV endorsing their product and that he can't return from hiding because he hasn't been able to shed the lard. No doubt a slender and revitalized Elvis shall come again with the new millennium.

The Elvis Is Alive Museum (Interstate 70 and Main Street, Wright, Missouri) is open 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. daily. Admission is $4 for adults, $2 for children aged six to 12 and adults over 60. Special attractions include a gift shop and a wedding chapel.

—*Carol Poster*

JOE DIMAGGIO, where have you gone? One could add Babe Ruth, Bobby Hull, and Dick Butkus. On good days American sports stars were treated more as gods than as mortal heroes, but on bad days they were booed mercilessly by fans. Booing is a grand old American tradition, but like nearly everything that's traditional, it's now under attack. Last fall the San Diego Padres proposed banning at Jack Murphy Stadium all signs, banners, and expressions "critical of the team's management." The A.C.L.U. intervened and convinced the team's owners to drop the proposal. "By affirming that fans may [be] critical of the team's ownership and management," said an A.C.L.U. spokeswoman, "the Padres have upheld this tradition." The woman obviously thought all's well that ends well, but this was a Pyrrhic victory at best. If booing has to be defended as a "human right," then it's hardly worth the effort.

The long arm of human rights and the A.C.L.U. has even reached down to the small ranching community of Hempstead, Texas, where the school board barred pregnant tarts from the high school cheerleading squad last October. The A.C.L.U. threatened law suits, the National Organization for Women claimed the ruling violated Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, and the federal government threatened to cut off funds to the community. Unsurprisingly, the town caved in the following month and reversed its ruling. "We are not rich enough to fight the deep pockets from the outside," said the school board president.

There's no doubt about it. Sports, which used to be a wild-game preserve for brutish, insensitive males, have been conquered by feminists, multiculturalists, and antiwhite racists. Ice skating is now taken seriously as one of our hallowed national pastimes, and sportswriters regularly pose as Freuds and Skinners and pontificate on such "news" as the victimization of Tonya Harding by patriarchy and poverty. A sporting event actually worthy of cultural commentary was the Wisconsin-Michigan State football game played last December. This was the most important game for Wisconsin in 31 years, for a victory meant that the Badgers would earn a trip to the coveted Rose Bowl on New Year's Day. And yet where was the game played? Not in the Midwest, but thousands of miles away in the Tokyo Dome—just another regional sacrifice on the altar of transnationalism.

A few years ago, Garry Trudeau made fun of Michael Milken for lecturing to university students, but where were the satirists when the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania invited boxing shyster Don King to give a lecture on entrepreneurship? Addressing a packed audience last November, King offered our future business leaders the following sage advice: "Image is the most important thing"; "You must write it on before you write it off" (this from a guy once charged with 24 counts of income-tax evasion); and "Never underestimate yourself. I have had setbacks every now and then. Failures? Never." Apparently beating a man to death over a gambling debt, for which he did four years in prison, doesn't count as a "failure" in King's moral ledger.

When football commissioner Paul Tagliabue chastised Arizonans in 1991 by denying them the Super Bowl because they didn't have a paid holiday in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr., this was only a preview of coming attractions. After Michael Jordan's father was murdered last summer, national sportswriters and the news media predictably implied that white racism had had a hand in the tragedy. The rural, white, Southern coroner who cremated the decomposed body of what was then considered a John Doe, you see, did so because the corpse was black, and, after all, we all know that that's the way the Redneck South has always and will always treat African-Americans. No one in the national press dare point out the obvious: that the father of one of the country's greatest athletes, of one of the black community's foremost heroes, had been killed not by a white but apparently by another black. It is exactly this type of racial politics that prevents any sustained national rebuke of such hustlers as Jesse Jackson, who cried at the annual Buffalo Bills Boondoggle last January that the NFL is racist because it allowed the Super Bowl to be

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played in a state that still flies the Stars and Bars. And it is this same apoplexy concerning issues of race that prevents colleges and universities from combating the specious charges of organizations like the Black Coaches Association, which regularly whines that because the Third World-level admission standards of our state universities are still too high for many black athletes, racism reigns—*ipso facto*—in the halls of academe.

Big-time sports are clearly now as racist and politicized as the other institutions of American culture, and the target is increasingly that vanishing American, the straight white male. The rednecks and beerguts who subsidize the NFL, NBA, NHL, and MLB had better find something else to do with their weekends. Tennis, anyone?

—*Theodore Pappas*

WHEN LORENA BOBBITT startled her hubby one evening with a knife through his privates—vigorously severing an intimate part of their relationship—a lot of women apparently admired the, uh, statement Lorena made that night. I own the conversation radio station for Lancaster & York counties in Pennsylvania, and the other morning Lorena Bobbitt talk poured from my office speaker. Phones sparkled with callers anxious to react. I thought about ambling down the hall to discuss the topic with the show's producer, a laser-sharp college coed majoring in communications. Then I remembered a fax from my station's legal consultant. It reviewed the recent Supreme Court decision on sexual harassment, together with a proposed series of rulings from the EEOC.

Teresa Harris was a 41-year-old manager of Forklift Systems in Nashville when the company's president, Charles Hardy, buffeted her with tasteless jokes. Annoyed beyond endurance, she quit and filed suit under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. While she claimed neither psychological damage nor interference with her productivity, alleged neither sexual extortion nor physical contact, she did provide ample evidence that Mr. Hardy was a lout with a sense of the comic that passed well beyond the limits of genteel taste.

In a unanimous decision, written by Sandra Day O'Connor, the High Court sided with Teresa Harris, ruling that Hardy was a lawbreaker and that his firm was subject to penalties to be determined by a lower court. This is a big-deal decision. Taste is now actionable. We've not come this way before. Justice O'Connor specifically wrote that the law as it applies to sexual harassment is violated when for any of a variety of reasons "the environment would reasonably be perceived, and is perceived, as hostile or abusive."

The Court says that psychological harm is not necessary to prove damage—it is enough that the employer either creates or allows a hostile environment to exist in the mind of the employee—a climate that would be judged hostile by a reasonable woman. Why the hunt for a reasonable victim rather than an actual victim? Because the Court hopes that it's come upon the foolproof test with the Reasonable Woman Doctrine. With this test, harassment has shifted from the need to prove a case of objective harm to proving a subjective offense. It's not a matter of whether you were hurt, but of whether you *think* you were—and of getting some other women to agree that they think so, too. If you can find enough women who agree that their gender is unable to cope with the pressures of words and pictures, or that women deserve romantic paternalism inserted between themselves and the loutish buffoonery of some men—you win money.

So there I was CEO of this broadcast company, preparing to go and ask a young woman to tell me how she, and her friends, felt about castration. Of course I stopped. Though the topic was interesting and on the tongue of every talk show host, and though my employee's job description called for her to listen to the show, it didn't demand she discuss such topics with her boss. What to do? Simple. I passed by the young producer's office and discussed it instead with our engineer, a man who is also taking university courses.

Simply put, all of this means that men in authority can't discuss sexual matters with women who work with them, even if their occupations dictate the occasional discussion of such subjects. Moreover, if a woman brings up such a topic, it's best to change the subject, for fear your reaction may be so candid as to set a "hostile" tone. The woman's regrets in participating in that interaction might easily escalate into a perception that you have created a hostile workplace. In fact, it's best to scold her about such talk, and to do it in front of a num-

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ber of potentially credible witnesses of both sexes. Keep notes, perhaps audio or video tapes.

While certainly no one who works with or for *you* would ever become sufficiently disturbed or angry to seek vengeance . . . it's been known to happen. By merely keeping a diary of these sorts of discussions, and by discussing her discomfort privately with friends, any woman can later bring a sexual harassment suit against a station, a production company, a magazine, or any business and its executives. How much later? Remember Clarence Thomas?

Now would your employees ever do any of this? Why not? It's a hard world out there. Business slips, a company cuts back, someone's fired. She demands reparations. Outrageous? Irresponsible? Women don't act like that? Does anyone know of a male defense comparable to Pre-Menstrual Syndrome? Courts say that PMS justifies premeditated murder since women suffer diminished rational capacity during certain times each month. Hmmmm. If women are the victims of raging hormone imbalance, does the expression "high-risk" come to mind when considering a female over a male to fill a job? Feminists are correct in decrying the dark side of men. They are wrong in denying their own.

Why would an executive hire or promote a woman when an equally qualified man was available? Suppose you must fill a high-pressure position with someone who will occasionally travel with you. You've got a choice between two equally attractive candidates, one a young woman, another a man. Why hazard travel with the woman, especially if you have any doubts about her ability to keep the job? Why not give the guy the break? Chances of him effectively charging sexual harassment are slim, bordering on zero, should he become embittered about his failure in the position.

Before any guy dismisses feminism as a showplace for irrelevant ensemble comedy, he should consider the case of the man sentenced for rape after sexual intercourse with a woman in plain view of others at a party. They testified that the woman disrobed and openly solicited the fella's attentions. However, her regrets the next morning propelled her to the police station. The courts ruled that her alcohol intake incapacitated her from rational participation just as certainly as if that man had tied her up. No one at the party saw her drinking, but she admitted to having arrived inebriated. A man hits someone while driving drunk and the victim will sue him for everything. A woman hits on a man while prowling drunk and she will sue him for everything. A drunken driver is responsible, a drunken woman isn't. These aren't subtle messages.

Naomi Wolf is a neo-feminist who worries "that the national forums of debate: op-ed pages, political magazines, public affairs talk shows, newspaper columns—remain strikingly immune to the general agitation for female access." In a *New Republic* article, Wolf constructed a wall of statistics to prove that women make up a tiny percentage of the guests on *Crossfire*, op-ed writers for the *Washington Post*, and reporters for the *New York Times*. Wolf's numbers showed women to be a minority of contributors to *Harper's*, the *New Republic*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Washington Monthly*, and *National Review*. And she counted fewer than six percent women among the nation's talk radio show hosts. Wolf says this is discrimination.

While searching recently to buy an air conditioner, I discriminated against the least efficient one I found, the least productive, the newest brands without performance records, the machines that would threaten me with the highest bills. Who wants that risk in a world of whimsical energy costs? That's informed discrimination, and perfectly rational. Rational discrimination is based upon knowledge. Irrational discrimination is a product of ignorance. Employment discrimination based solely upon race, religion, gender, national origin, or disability reduces the pool of applicants from which an employer can choose. It establishes a test that's certain to screen out potentially productive employees. In the long run it will be inefficient—that is, if discriminating on the basis of gender is a product of ignorance.

But sexual harassment (as well as child abuse) has become the 90's equivalent of the charge of witchcraft. Today an executive or a business that's merely accused of sexual harassment faces such potential public derision that to risk it is foolhardy. With the Supreme Court and the EEOC having designated women as a protected class, any employer who ignores the potential liability of hiring or promoting them needs solemn risk-management counseling. Media topics are especially explosive, and it's not rational to hire shaky people around nitro. Men who "don't get it" are likely to find themselves enrolled in the Anita Hill Sanitarium for Wayward Boys.

In the present climate, Ms. Wolf's numbers will not get better. Of course some men are slimy, but, ironically, feminist battlefield victories have turned irrational discrimination against women in the work place into its rational opposite. In hunting for monsters to slay, feminists have forgotten the adage: "Imagination invents dragons where reality presents nothing worse than lizards."

—*Ted Byrne*

JIM MORRISON would have been 50 years old last December 8, and as the world press reported, the rock star's final resting place, the Gothic Cimetière Père Lachaise in northern Paris—where Balzac, Chopin, and Oscar Wilde are also buried—has become a cult attraction for a new generation of young Americans. American novelist Douglas Coupland describes these young Americans as "Global Teens": the 1990's offspring of 1960's-era parents. On the day my wife and I visited Père Lachaise, hundreds of Global Teens flocked to Morrison's grave. Some even traveled to the tomb with their aging hippie parents.

Ironically, Morrison went into self-imposed exile in Paris to escape the public limelight. During the late 1960's, Morrison was lead singer of The Doors, and throughout his life Morrison attempted to convey the image of a mysterious, troubled poet. His songs are full of moody, obscure references to death, rebirth, and orgiastic, drug-induced experiences. Morrison's penchant for self-destruction led to frequent confrontations with authorities, among them one well-publicized arrest in Miami in March 1969 for "exhibiting lewd and lascivious behavior by exposing his private parts and by simulating masturbation and oral copulation on stage."

Morrison's short, excessive life ended on July 3, 1971, in his Paris bathtub. His wife, Pam, found him dead, a victim of heart failure. He was 27. Before dropping out of film school at UCLA, Morrison wooed his future wife with talk about Native American shamans who take peyote and see images "from the other side." Pam Morrison died of a heroin overdose in April 1974.

With Hollywood filmmaker Oliver Stone's 1991 movie *The Doors*, the Mor-

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rison cult spread to an entirely new generation. It thrives today, spurred by admirers and imitators in New Wave bands from Berlin to Los Angeles. Their anthem is the graffiti on the tombstones leading to Morrison's grave: "Kill your parents," "The Lizard King lives," "Break on through to the other side," "It's better to burn out than fade away," and "I will see you after my death and we will f--- a long time."

In Douglas Coupland's novel *Shampoo Planet*, the protagonist, Tyler Johnson, asks a young woman named Chyna why she is visiting Morrison's grave. Chyna hands Tyler "an unsolicited but much appreciated beer" and explains, "Because knowing my idols are dead makes death a lot less scary place."

Tyler is an ambitious 20-year-old Reagan youth who was raised in a hippie commune by his now-divorced 60's-era parents. He lives in a decaying Pacific Northwest city and aspires to a career with the corporation whose offices his mother once firebombed. The highlight of *Shampoo Planet*'s six-month chronicle of Tyler's life is his pilgrimage to Père Lachaise and the ongoing party beside Morrison's grave. "Kind of puts the fun back in funeral, doesn't it?" observes Mike, a 20-year-old from Urbana, Illinois, as he buries a joint of marijuana in the soil next to Morrison's tombstone.

Daisy, Tyler's younger sister, pleads with him in a letter to swipe a flower from Morrison's grave. "A group of us shortly left the cemetery," Tyler writes, "beers in hand and me with a daisy for Daisy in my backpack." The flowers I observed on my visit remained on Morrison's grave, perhaps because two Paris *gendarmes* are stationed at the tomb to maintain order. Barbed wire was added to the iron fence surrounding Père Lachaise, a 34-year-old *pied noir* from the Comoros explained in French, to stop the flow of young Americans illegally entering the cemetery at night to vandalize and party next to Morrison's grave.

One of the most popular T-shirts worn by young Americans in Europe these days features the slogan "Kill your idols" superimposed over the crucified head of Jesus Christ. The shirt is popular at Morrison's grave and outside Notre Dame and Sacre Coeur in Paris. In Italy late one afternoon, I counted half a dozen near the walls of the Vatican. That morning, I had been awakened at 5:30 A.M. by a Muslim praying feverishly in the next room.

—*Greg Kaza*

SECESSION, or at least political subdivision, is looking increasingly attractive to many Americans. Both ideas were long considered *outre*, even unacceptable. But as the Civil War, our last such great experiment, recedes into history, the cries to break away, or at least to break up, are growing louder.

CALIFORNIA: Lalaland is the home of full-spectrum crackpotism and Governor Moonbeam, plus the State Commission on Self-Esteem (I kid you not). But its establishment has finally come up with a good idea: subdivide California into three states. Such a plan has been introduced by Assemblyman Stan Statham (R-Oak Run) and endorsed by Assembly Speaker Willie Brown (D-San Francisco) and Lt. Gov. Leo McCarthy. Thus, support for the plan includes both rural and urban elements, both Republicans and Democrats. Although Libertarians support the freedom to subdivide or to secede, there are as yet none in the California legislature.

The advisory measure to subdivide California will be on the November 8, 1994, ballot. In 1992, voters in 27 of 31 northern and central counties voted in favor. That's an unprecedented 87 percent vote of approval. Maybe the time *has* come.

The time almost came on several occasions in the past. California was barely a state in 1850 when proposals to bisect or trisect it arose three years running. They were ignored. Five years later came a plan to create the state of Columbia out of north-central California. It met official silence. The plan grew into trisection to form the states of Shasta (north), California (central), and Colorado (south). Again, no action. Then, in 1859, the proposed "Coloradans" voted 75 percent to partition off. Those in power yawned. (The name "Colorado" was used 17 years later for the state surrounding Denver.) As late as 1939, northern Californians and southern Oregonians tried to form a new state. But still, neither their legislatures nor Congress would listen.

"California has become too large and too complex to be managed efficiently as a single unit." That official statement came from the State Assembly's Office of Research. There are more Californians (roughly 32 million) than there are Canadians (28 million). The Golden State is three-fourths larger than the Empire State (New York) and almost double the size of the Lone Star State (Texas). Its population exceeds the 22 smallest states *combined*. One of every eight Americans is a Californian.

NEW YORK CITY: For years, there's been talk of New York City seceding from New York State. If you've ever lived there, you know that NYC is even more socialistic than Upstate, if that's possible. Breaking off NYC, Long Island, and perhaps Westchester County to create another state might make sense.

The Big Apple itself faces serious breakaway sentiment in Staten Island, the least populated, most pastoral of its five boroughs and the only one without a subway. (The others are Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn.) In fact, Staten Island is somewhat closer to New Jersey than to the rest of "the City." Furthermore, it's connected to "Jersey" via three bridges but is tied to NYC only by the Verrazano Narrows Bridge—the longest suspension bridge in the world.

Given the option, 65 percent of Staten Island's voters favored secession last November. Thus, Staten Island—official borough name, Richmond—could become New York State's second-largest city, replacing Buffalo. However, the state legislature and the governor must approve such a move. Since the governor is Mario Cuomo, this is dubious at best.

MIDWEST: Illinois has toyed for years with the idea of cutting off Chicago and Cook County from Downstate. So far, no real action. And residents of Michigan—which is already in two large geographic masses—have discussed politically separating the "U.P." (Upper Peninsula) from the highly populated and labor union-dominated Lower Peninsula. But secessionist sentiment, as you might expect, is not strong in these two former fighting states of the blue-coated Union.

FAR NORTH: The incumbent Alaskan Governor Wally Hickel was elected in 1990 from the Alaska Independence Party, whose main platform was to secede from the United States and form an independent republic. Since elected, though, Hickel has ignored the strident calls of his AIP copartisans for secession. Even sadder, the AIP's founder, Joe Vogler, mysteriously disappeared in June 1993 while walking in the woods.

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Another idea—which was presented to me as an Alaskan legislator from 1985 to 1987—is for Alaska, Yukon, and British Columbia all to secede and form the Republic of Northwest America. Whether that's a good idea or not, it is far easier for a province to secede than for a state to do so.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: Statehood has been suggested for D.C., but that would be unconstitutional. The District was specifically set up to house the nation's capital—to be neutral, not to compete with other states for favors from the government literally in its own backyard. In fact, the Constitution stipulates (Article I, Section 8) that "Congress shall . . . exercise exclusive legislation . . . over such District . . . as may, by cession of particular states . . . become the seat of government of the United States." That's why it is called a district—it is *not* a state, constitutionally. However, it *is* heavily Democratic, which is why Teddy Kennedy and Jesse Jackson (its nonvoting "senator") want to statify it: more Democratic legislators and members of Congress and another Democratic governor.

HAS SECESSION EVER SUCCEEDED? Yes. Secession is not just a wild-eyed dream; it's actually been done. In 1820, Maine broke off from Massachusetts to become the 23rd state. In 1861, rather than seceding from the United States as *part* of Virginia, "Kanawha" seceded *from* Virginia. Two years later, it became the 35th state after changing its name to West Virginia. And Texas seceded from Mexico in 1836—via a bloody, antisecessionist war—to become the Republic of Texas.

WOULD SUBDIVISION WORK? Consider: as three states, California would be *smaller* at home but *bigger* in Congress. The three Californias would still be among the ten largest states. However, each would be one-third its current size, bringing state government that much closer to the voters. And the closer government is to the people, the better it is.

As a separate state, Northern California could abolish its state income tax, lower its property taxes, and rescind regulations that restrict outdoor activities. Central California could liberalize laws to allow more hospices for persons with AIDS. Southern California could characteristically try to limit development by raising taxes and tightening regulations to "preserve lifestyles." These various changes might be popular in one California but unpopular in the other two. If so, they could *only* be achieved if California had three state legislatures and governors.

In Congress, Californian senators would increase from two to six. This may sound trivial, but California's caucus would almost triple, from one of every 50 senators to one of every 17. (Since representatives are elected by population, that count would probably not change.)

If California were a country, it would have the seventh largest economy in the world. Some might say: don't break that up. But think about it—is California's economic power ever wielded cohesively, like a hammer? No. It's what each person experiences that is important. And with three separate, smaller state governments, plus more senators in Congress, things might significantly improve for Californians.

THE FUTURE: Whenever subdivision or secession appears on the ballot, voters should ask themselves: distant, larger government or closer, smaller government? More power to the bureaucrats or more power to me? Bigger might be better in making soap, but not in making government. In fact, the reverse seems true: the bigger the government, the more it intrudes into our lives and the less individual control each of us has over our time, our money, and our body.

And what's wrong with secession? Why do the two major parties—Democratic and Republican—support the right of self-determination for, say, Bosnians but not for Texans or Alaskans? Why did the United States go to war to preserve self-governance for Kuwaitis (1991) but to deny it to Southerners (1861)? Seems to me, Americans have as much right to govern themselves as do Bosnians or Kuwaitis. And that right to self-governance includes secession or subdivision.

—Andre Marrou

OBITER DICTA: We have only to report that *Chronicles* is available at the following bookstores in Washington, D.C.: Borders Books & Music, 18th Street and L Street; The News World, 1001 Connecticut Avenue; American International News, Inc., 1825 I Street, NW; Walden Books, 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW; and B. Dalton Booksellers, Union Station 112.

Pencil Sharpener

by Michael McFee

He'd visit it when things were slow,
an antique movie camera
whose cranked handle could accelerate
the comedy of school.

He'd visit it when things were boring,
dialing the diameter of a pencil
and feeding it like ammo
to the cartoon machine gun

whose hungry roar obliterated the class.
And when he was kept after school
to empty the sharpeners,
he'd scatter a handful of sweet smudgy shavings

for the wild birds building nests
and burn the rest.

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by Samuel Francis

Beam Us Out

On a morning in April 1990, practitioners of the journalistic craft received in their mail a communication from one Jack Lichtenstein, at that time the director of public affairs for the National Endowment for the Arts, an agency then embroiled in a desperate onslaught by an army of Philistines, voters, and taxpayers who imagined that they ought to have some voice in determining what their government does. Mr. Lichtenstein's purpose in reaching out to the purveyors of news and opinion was to do whatever he could to keep the hordes at bay and save the NEA and his own job from the appointment with a brick wall that the outraged citizens had in mind for them. In the course of expatiating upon all the good things the federal art munchkins had spawned upon the Republic, Mr. Lichtenstein let slip his insight that "the arts, once found only in metropolitan areas, today are flourishing in Alaska and Alabama, in Maine and Montana, and everywhere in between."

So far as I know, the editors and editorial writers who were the objects of Mr. Lichtenstein's solicitations ignored his entire package, and to this day the awesome banality he emitted in the above passage has remained undiscovered. It apparently occurred to no one to upbraid the director of public affairs for the ignorance of "the arts" that he betrayed, the contempt in which he evidently held the rest of the country, or—most interesting of all perhaps—the facile conceit his insight revealed. That conceit, of course, is the assumption that the only civilized parts of the country are Mr. Lichtenstein's luminous "metropolitan areas" and that the nonmetropolitan portions of the land—Alaska, Alabama, Maine, Montana, and all those unnameable and unpronounceable regions "in between"—are naturally immersed in such an impenetrable cultural darkness that only the bureaucratic enlightenment of the federal leviathan could lift them out. The whole burden of Mr. Lichtenstein's impassioned communication to journalists was that if the rubes and yahoos then besieging his beloved endowment should succeed, the nether portions of the land would once again be delivered into the iron grip of Chaos and Old Night.

It does not occur to those of Mr. Lichtenstein's persuasion that art, so far from being dependent upon or the invention of the state and the monopoly of "metropolitan areas," is inherent in man's nature and that it will flourish and does flourish even when the state and the metropolitan areas with which the state naturally allies itself do not exist. If the famous prehistoric paintings in the paleolithic cave dwellings of central France prove nothing else, they confirm that no sooner had human beings separated themselves from their tree-swinging ancestors than they began to create art, and the careful depictions on that dark stone by primeval Raphaels and Michelangelos of elk and bison, religious rituals and hunting adventures, display a developed technique of art that most of the recipients of NEA grants today are unable to match. Had Cro-Magnon men enjoyed the assistance of Mr. Lichtenstein and the United States government in their aesthetic efforts, it is likely that the emergence of human civilization would have been retarded for several millennia and that even today the whole planet would remain engrossed in the same darkness that Mr. Lichtenstein imagines still holds sway in Maine and Montana.

Mr. Lichtenstein, of course, is not alone in harboring this conceit, and the main reason his banality passed unnoticed was that most of the journalists who received it share the conceit and never entertained an inkling that he had made a fool of himself by disclosing it. The idea that the arts, and with them the whole of human civilization, are the exclusive inventions of metropolitan areas and the federal government is one of the central assumptions of the body of men and women who in recent years have come to be known as the "cultural elite," and it is through this idea that the elite not only legitimizes its existence and activities but also establishes the rationale for its continuing war against the real culture of the American Outback. It is precisely for the waging of that war that the NEA was created in the first place, and the more bizarre erotodigestive escapades in which the endowment indulged in the 1980's (and which it continues to this day) after the Stupid Party took it over are only the most extreme examples of its continuing mission.

It is entirely appropriate that the cultural elite the NEA serves should entrench itself in bureaucratic form. Earlier cultural elites—of Periclean Athens, Augustan Rome, Renaissance Florence, Elizabethan England, 17th-century France, etc.—also often allied themselves with the state, but the state in those regimes was not bureaucratic but a personal despotism of one kind or another, and neither the elites nor the despots employed themselves in the destruction of the culture of the peoples they ruled. Today, however, all elites typically assume bureaucratic forms, not only because bureaucracy provides the most efficient means yet invented for organizing power but also because, lacking any deep support or roots in the civil society, today's cultural elites have no other organizational basis for their power. Unable to peddle its garbage on the market, incapable of duping or flattering wealthy patrons into supporting it, and despising the prospect of working for a living like everyone else, the cultural elite has no other recourse but to rely on bureaucratic mechanisms to sustain itself, its privileges, its productions, and its power.

Indeed, what is true of that part of the cultural elite supported by the NEA and similar federal agencies is true of the cultural elite as a whole, even those parts not directly subsidized by the state. The expression "popular culture" originally meant those elements of culture produced by the people. Today, it means nothing of the sort, but rather culture produced for the people by elites, and the elites, whether "publicly" or "privately" endowed, are invariably entwined with bureaucratic organizations. A number of scholars, from Daniel Bell to Jacques Barzun to Russell Jacoby, have remarked on the singularity of a culture that is increasingly lodged in bureaucratized universities in the form of art de-

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partments, literature departments, writers- and artists- and poets-in-residence, and so forth. Outside the universities, what passes as popular culture manifests itself in television, films, journalism, publishing, music, museums, galleries, and amusement parks, all of which are bureaucratic and professionalized in form, most of which are directly or indirectly dependent on the state, and all of which claim to provide for the people a culture that is so superior to what the people can produce for themselves that they don't need to worry about producing their own.

Moreover, the incessant message of this culture is a thematic development of the conceit Mr. Lichtenstein revealed. My personal favorite example of it is *Star Trek*, though any number of other television series also illustrate the pattern. *Star Trek*, however, has been plastered on the screens of American living rooms for some 30 years, and despite the vapidity of its plots and characters the show seems destined to attain at least as much immortality as paleolithic cave paintings. Week after week during those 30 years, the crew of the starship "Enterprise" has bustled back and forth about the universe violating its own laws forbidding interference in other planets' business and performing deeds of liberated derring-do. Usually the cosmic conundrums it encounters and speedily resolves are transparent allegorical representations of whatever social crisis preoccupies the real cultural elite at the moment. In the 1960's, racial discrimination was a favorite target of the series, later variegated by the iniquities of war, ecological catastrophe, sexism, and the psychological problems of children who are disciplined by their parents. The constant butt of *Star Trek* jokes are the obsolete customs and sometimes obnoxious beliefs and habits of 20th-century man, who is nothing more than a metaphor for Mr. Lichtenstein's Maine and Montana, and the typical and predictable "irony" the series inevitably presents is that the monstrous aliens and androids who populate its cast are more morally responsible beings than the backward humans of either our own time or the progressive and emancipated world of the future.

The public orthodoxy of the world of *Star Trek* is virtually identical to that sappy and syrupy credo concocted by Francis Fukuyama in his ill-advised "end of history" thesis, though the TV series is better science fiction. The planet Earth and much of the inhabited universe have been unified under a mysterious, omnipotent, but benevolent "Federation," and there seem to be no wars, no political or social conflicts, and no wants in this warp-speed utopia unified by Global Democratic Capitalism gone galactic. Indeed, what else does the human race in the *Star Trek* cosmos have to do but stick its nose into the affairs of other species? They can zip about the galaxy at velocities faster than light and "beam" themselves from one place to another instantaneously, and there never seems to be any question of food, clothing, money, disease, aging, or even of career advancement in this placid paradise. Having resolved all conceivable material problems of the human race, the only woes that remain for them in the world of *Star Trek* are those perennially invented by the cultural elite, of which the Enterprise's crew is an equally transparent representation, and, of course, armed with energy weapons and beamer-uppers, the elite always solves these problems as quickly and as happily as it discovers them.

Star Trek represents what the cultural elite thinks America and the world should and would be like if only the Philistines would get out of the way and let the Federation (i.e., Leviathan) spend their money as it wants, and the enduring popularity of the series suggests that no small number of viewers at least unconsciously share this vision or have absorbed its premises. That, of course, is what comes of surrendering the production and even the meaning of "popular culture" to the elite. Long ago, sometime between the sketching of the paleolithic cave paintings and the beginning of real history in 1965 when the NEA was foisted upon us, there used to be a real popular culture in America, not only in Maine and Montana but even in metropolitan areas like New York and Boston. In that veiled and lost epoch, many Americans played musical instruments instead of buying recordings produced by European musicians and Japanese corporations, wrote poetry for themselves instead of puzzling over thin volumes of crippled and bitter verse cranked out by whatever lesbian poetess-in-residence New York publishing houses have decided to make a celebrity for a week, and acted in and sometimes even

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wrote plays that they produced themselves in local theaters instead of packing the house to gibber over Madonna, Michael Jackson, *Wayne's World*, and *Nightmare on Elm Street, Part 79*. Today, in most American cities and towns, locally owned bookstores that sell anything but secondhand books are almost extinct, and the Crowns, Waldens, and B. Daltons that dominate professional bookselling offer exactly the same stock in every city in the country, almost none of which would have complied with the conventional and moderate obscenity laws of the 1950's.

The transference of cultural power and cultural production from the people who consume it to bureaucratized elites that despise and fear their own audiences is of course an aspect of the continuing destruction of republican self-government, no less than the transference of political and economic power to similar bureaucratized elites in the centralized government and economy. Indeed, it is hardly an accident that the corporate, governmental, and academic bureaucracies that house and support the cultural elite also provide lodgings for the elites in the state and economy. The function of the cultural elite in the managerial system is to provide legitimation, not only for itself but also for its siblings in government and corporation, and the calculated insults to and debunking of the culture of the American Heartland are an integral part of the revolutionary strategy the elite pursues and practices. Only by portraying those parts of the country not totally under managerial control—namely, Alabama and Alaska, Maine and Montana—as dark-age wastelands isolated from the metropolitan and cosmopolitan centers of managed mass culture can the elite purport that what it is and what it does is useful or necessary, and when it so portrays the rest of the country, it also paves the highway by which the rest of the managerial apparatus will one day ride into town.

The result, so far from the interstellar Eden of *Star Trek*, is an emasculated population unable either to produce an enduring civilization in the shape of a culture of its own or to understand what civilizations of the past have already produced, a passive and continuously entertained and managed mob that has already surrendered its capacity to govern itself and is now busily and merrily in the process of surrendering its capacity to think and create for itself. The final and unpredictable irony of our civilization may be that at the dawn of its history we were more civilized than at the end of it. The paleolithic savages who painted the walls of the caverns they lived in with pictures of the beasts they hunted created a higher and better civilization than Captain Kirk and his preposterous band of progressive monsters and robots promise us, and those savages were far more civilized than the Mapplethorpes and Serranos financed by the NEA or the Lichtensteins who make their livings defending them. If Americans who still know what a culture is would like to have one of their own, the most revolutionary act they could perpetrate would be simply to turn off the television, cancel their subscriptions to most magazines, and start looking for a cave with some bare space on its walls. ◁c

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Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Turn Out the Lights

by Thomas Fleming

It must have been Sigmund Freud who observed that whenever a new technology appears it is applied almost immediately to some sexual purpose. The dirty old man of Vienna was thinking of such inventions as the photograph and the moving picture, which gave a new impetus to the production and consumption of pornography, but he might just as well have been describing his own métier. As soon as experts appeared, claiming to have invented a science of the human mind, some of those experts began work on the first "scientific" treatises on sexuality. Freud, who was himself more sex-obsessed than his patients, devised a theory of psychoanalysis that is a mere projection of his need to reduce all human life to the sexual dimension. No wonder people found it so titillating. For most people psychoanalytic theory is nothing more than highbrow pornography, and the process of analysis, although designed as an exercise in *self*-abuse, turns all too frequently into a sexual relationship between the supposed doctor and his patient. Therapists have taken one step past even Casanova, who is said to have seduced women before robbing them. Now, they take the money as a down payment.

The 20th century has been the century of gimcracks, a remarkable number of which have been sexually exploited. Henry Ford's motor cars may have spattered the highways with blood, but who knows how many children were conceived in them? The automobile, in turn, gave birth to the motor hotel, which has replaced the bordello as well as the hotel, and there is hardly any need to mention sound recordings, since most contemporary pop music would have been regarded as obscene even a generation ago, or the telephone, whose latest contribution to enlightenment is the 900 phone-sex that recently bankrupted a village in Guatemala.

But it is audio-visual technology—film and television—that has become the staple of the pornography industry, and no backwoods American village is complete without a late-night sex channel and a video store renting X-rated films. The big breakthrough, however, is virtual reality. In its infant stage a few years ago, virtual reality allowed the viewer to imagine he was having carnal intercourse with a woman who, in real life, would not let him buy her a drink, but we are a progressive people, and by 1993 it was possible to participate in a gang rape without leaving the safety and convenience of one's own home.

Think about it. Your next-door neighbor's teenage lout—the one who occasionally babysits for you—is staying up all night with his senses plugged into sex videos. To enhance the illusion, he may be smoking dope or snorting coke. Whatever is going on in his mind is, in this free Republic of ours, of no consequence since the right to see dirty movies was a primary concern of the Founding Fathers, who inserted the "freedom from censorship" clause into the Constitution. You can find it right after the part that says all men are created equal.

The constitutional right to perversity only stops at the point of coercion, and it is not too hard to imagine a day when women will have the right to be murdered for pay on SNUFF TV. "You don't have to watch" is the inevitable answer, but to avoid perversity in the 1990's would mean wearing earplugs and a blindfold most of the time. Curiosity is one of man's defining qualities, and it is particularly strong in children, who could not escape the mercenary eroticism of our culture even if they tried. It is all around them and us, in the 7-Eleven stores, in the video parlors, and on cable channels. We cannot watch the evening news or pick up the *Chicago Tribune* or the poor benighted *Rockford Register Star* without learning the details of Michael Jackson's relations with little boys or of the broomstick jugglery performed by high-school wrestling teams. What would once have been called hard-core pornography can now be seen in R-rated movies, and it is not at all difficult to

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get your hands on the kinds of pornographic materials people once had to order from France.

If we move from the would-be rapist's bedroom, where he has his own computer, television, stereo system, and VCR, down to the family room to take a peek at what Mom and Dad are watching, we will not be too surprised at their son's viewing habits. Many American families routinely rent films like *Blue Velvet* and *Basic Instinct*, and even if they do not allow their children to watch these films with them, kids always know what their parents are up to.

Let us suppose these are good Christian people who do not want to see Michael Douglas's backside; they do, nonetheless, like to watch PG movies and network television. When the set is off, the men may look at *Sports Illustrated*, their wives at *People*. If future archaeologists were lucky enough to locate a fair sampling of this cultural stratum, they might conclude, erroneously, that they had struck upon a late 20th-century pornographer's collection of exotica, while the truth is they had tunneled into the public library.

The week before preparing this issue, I was laid up with the Beijing flu. With senses sharpened by pain and a brain dulled by multicultural microbes, I was in shape to carry out my long-deferred experiment: watching a week of network television. Equipped with soft pillow and comfy chair ("Not the comfy chair!"), I watched new shows and reruns, talk shows and soaps, cartoons and real-life cop thrillers. My 12-year-old son who loves TV was thrilled in anticipation of seeing all the programs we never watch. Mostly for his benefit, I took a look at several family shows, such as *Full House*, but his attention wandered by the second commercial and before long he was off somewhere playing a game. In the middle of the second night, he came in and looked at a few minutes of *Beverly Hills, 90210*: "When I grow up," he concluded, "I sure hope I don't have your job."

The only important conclusion I was able to draw is banal enough: network television is awful, worse than even I had imagined. For one thing, the writing is wretched. I do not recall laughing aloud except once, when Phil Donahue was doing his impersonation of a public intellectual. Phil really is, without knowing it, a comedic genius, a sort of Professor Irwin Corey in spite of himself, and when he teams up with that other incorrigible clown, Vlad Pozner, the result is zanier than anything since Olson and Johnson.

Of the shows that were actually billed as comedies, only *Seinfeld* offered anything that could be recognized as jokes. Of the two episodes I saw, one was amusing in a neurotic sort of way but spoiled by Mr. Seinfeld's acting. Like Roseanne Arnold, Seinfeld seems to be staring at the cameraman, and he delivers his lines like a blackjack dealer laying out cards: efficient, well-timed, predictable. I had heard a great deal about the show, that it was "hip" and risqué, but all I found was the same formula-humor that dominated television the last time I watched it. Seinfeld was a lot dirtier—one whole show was devoted to an anonymous woman who makes a salacious proposition on tape. When it turns out to be his old girlfriend's idea of a joke, Seinfeld and his friends begin to eye her like a package of prime porterhouse being slowly unwrapped by a refugee from the Duke rice diet.

Another thing that has come a long way is the depiction of Jews. In the good old days of a decade ago, it seemed like an unwritten law that Jews played Italians and gentiles played Jews. Jewish characters were conceived of, essentially, as gentiles with one or two distinguishing features—academic achievement and obsessive mothers. *Seinfeld*, on the other hand, might have been conceived by Julius Streicher: the main characters are whining and ineffectual; the humor descends to the level of nose-picking and sex fantasy. Why doesn't the Anti-Defamation League do something about the self-hating Jews who write these shows?

The Simpsons also pokes fun at American Jews but in the same spirit with which it picks on Hindus, cops, fundamentalists, and schoolteachers. For all its faults, *The Simpsons* is the only serious social satire allowed on television. Who can forget the episode in which Lisa turns bad and steals all the teachers' editions? "Does anyone remember the multiplication tables?" screams the math teacher. When Bart, like the good brother he is underneath, takes the heat, his punishment is to write "I will not expose the ignorance of my teachers."

Television humor, for the most part, seems to consist of ethnic stereotyping and references to other television shows. On Fox TV's *Sinbad*, a child refuses to go to church because he does not believe in God. At this point Stepin Fetchit—or is it Mantan Moreland or Nick O'Demus—challenges his atheism: "Then how you explain Wile E. Coyote?" Imagine if a white comic said blacks are so dumb they think Wile E. Coyote's survival is a proof of God's existence? And if it is not Roadrunner cartoons, it is *The Brady Bunch* or *Bonanza* that provides the only cultural frame of reference that can be taken for granted.

Much of the criticism of television has been selectively directed at MTV or particularly violent programs like *NYPD Blue*. This is a sucker's game. Banning MTV is a perfectly good idea, but neither the gangsta rap videos nor Beavis and Butthead are anything more than the most superficial symptoms of a disease that has rotted out the institutions of our common life. One does not turn on MTV to receive edification any more than young men buy *Playboy* for the interviews. These are the red-light districts of the popular media: they have always been with us and always will be.

We must not expect to hear a Sunday school lesson in a bordello. Fair enough. But why should we tolerate the *Playboy* philosophy in Sunday school? The danger to society, represented by popular entertainment, is not to be found on the fringes but at the center, which seems to represent the moral system of the majority. The nastier shows do less harm precisely because we know they are nasty, and it is as much of a waste of time to criticize rock videos as it is to attack Bill Clinton. That Disney movies and conservative Republicans should represent the mainstream, that is the real American horror.

So long as film has existed there have been adult movies, by which I do not mean pornography but serious films on themes that are not "suitable for younger audiences." The same warning label should be placed on the plays of Shakespeare, Euripides, and Eugene O'Neill. Goethe observed that the admission of young women to the theater had ruined German drama, because it was no longer possible to take up difficult matters on the stage. Goethe lived in an age when people understood that even some very moral literature is not suitable for everyone, but democracy seems to assume that sauce for the gander must always be sauce for the goose and her goslings. If father can see a production of a licentious play, such as *The Country Wife*, then it must be, according to the 14th Amendment, fun for the whole family.

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I do not think anyone regarded Ernst Lubitsch's sex farces as family entertainment, and although *To Be or Not to Be* and *The Merry Widow* would offend a Puritan, the vice is frivolous to the point of delicacy, reminiscent of Landor's description of Catullus: "Such stains there are . . . as when a Grace / Sprinkles another's laughing face / with nectar, and runs on." They did make movies of immoral tendency in the 30's and 40's, but it was also the age of John Ford and Frank Capra, and most people seem to have known the difference between *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* and *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. I do not know precisely when the morals of Don Juan became confused with "family values," but the revolution was accomplished by the time I was old enough to see films like *Pillow Talk*, whose message is simple: there is nothing wrong with Doris Day that a night in the sack with Rock Hudson cannot fix. Hollywood is, after all, the land of impossible dreams.

By the 70's moral corruption was a given of American film, and the more wholesome a movie looked on the surface, the more depraved was its subtext. *Paper Moon*, which was advertised as an endearing and old-fashioned comedy, was in reality among the nastiest films of the decade— a film that made vice cute and portrayed the Middle American family as a stultifying second-best to a life spent as a con artist. In fact, most of the family movies and TV shows of the past ten years are as solid as *Paper Moon*, and when I hear evangelicals recommending *E.T.* (hate your own species and love ugliness) or *The Cosby Show* (it's easy to have a successful black family, so long as Dad's a doctor, Mom's a lawyer, and both spend most of their time at home with the kids), I can only speculate on what Italians would call their *formazione*.

Some conservatives like to think that simple, decent people are being corrupted by improper role models. If only Magic Johnson had not done whatever he did to contract AIDS; if only Michael Jordan did not consort with gamblers; if only Cher would act her age. . . . But "the fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars but in ourselves that we are underlings." Wherever did we get this notion that entertainers—or, worse, athletes—were human beings worthy of imitation? Once upon a time "show people," as we used to call them, were regarded as suspicious characters who, even if they lived blameless lives, had trivialized themselves by acting out other people's fantasies (consider the depiction of the players in *Nicholas Nickleby*). An athlete might be admired for his physical prowess, but only a "sportsman" would wish to make his acquaintance.

Today, however, the tables are turned, and it is everyday life that seems to be an illusion, while the affairs of strippers and basketball players who dribble on and off the court are the reality. One night I fell asleep during the evening news, and when I awoke I was treated to the details of a celebrity sex scandal. It gets worse every day, was my first thought, until I realized that the program was *A Current Affair* and not Dan Rather—a distinction without a difference.

Anyone who read the front pages of a newspaper during the past year might conclude that the most important events were the death of a basketball player's father, the same player's retirement, Burt and Loni's divorce, Donald and Marla's wedding, and an injured skating queen. Mr. Jordan and Miss Kerrigan may be estimable people, for all I know, but they are only entertainers, and any information about their careers belongs in the sports section rather than on the front page, and as for Mr. Trump and Mr. Reynolds, while it would once have been sufficient to declare that they are not gentlemen, I am more inclined to wonder if they are even human, much less men. There is something seriously wrong with any person who thinks that anything Michael Jordan does is news, and something wrong with a newspaper that would deface its front page with the rumor that Mr. Jordan is going to try out for the White Sox. This, then, is the substratum, the foundations of American culture: pregnant pinup girls on the cover of *Vanity Fair* and headline stories of emasculation. If cultures were separable, if high and low could be distinguished like Saxon and Norman in 1100, we might be content to sigh, regretfully, over the way these peasant dogs live and spend our time only on the upper slopes of literature and art.

Unfortunately, the same people who grew up watching *Father Knows Best* and *The Brady Bunch* are now writing novels and painting pictures. If American education amounted to anything, a few years in high school and college might be expected to elevate the aspiring artist above Wally and Beaver or Beavis and Butt-head, but such is not the case, because the people teaching literature and art, however advanced their pretensions, are accurate reflections of the movies, TV shows, and pop music that formed their taste and character. For the artist, what you get is what you see, and it is no accident that 60's pop art appealed to an entire generation of TV-watchers and consumers.

The problem with American culture was summed up last fall the day after both Federico Fellini and River Phoenix died. If popular culture has ever reached the level of real art, it is in Fellini's best films. Mr. Phoenix, on the other hand, had starred in a number of forgettable teen-exploitation movies. Whose demise received top billing? If you have to ask, you must be Italian.

Night after night we were treated to the sordid details of River Phoenix's "lifestyle." He was, his hippie mother sobbed, a victim of this cruel and unjust society. First the whales, now this. *Espresso*'s American correspondent, Vittorio Zucconi, had obviously had enough and titled his column "*Requiem per un cretino*," pointing out the moral inequivalence between a victim of the metro killer and "a degraded young man, bored and overpaid, who destroys his own life with drugs." The Italian "prefer[s] to lament the passenger and not the star." Few American journalists can still make such a distinction.

What sort of person can regard River Phoenix as a victim of anything but himself? TV watchers, sports aficionados, *People* magazine-readers—the majority, in other words, of the American people. When Homer Simpson goes to college, he can only view his experience as an extension of *Animal House*, and when his distorted view of reality lands his friends in trouble, his only solution is a prank. Is he sure it will work? Of course, he insists, unless TV and the movies have lied to him all these years.

But television and the movies do lie, and their lies go far beyond the impossibly beautiful stories of gods and heroes on which we used to nourish our character. The lies told by poets used to represent our highest aspirations; now they hint at our basest declinations. There is some good even in the worst of us, a good deal of evil in the best, and on this basis every decent person must be shown to be a hypocrite, every villain a hero. Hollywood's lies corrode our inner spirit; they make us hate ourselves and go whoring after strange gods. Worst of all, they require no effort but are slipped into our consciousness as easily as a shot of heroin, and with the same effect. In reading a book or watching a play, we can abstract ourselves from the ac-

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tion and judge it critically; with film and television, such abstraction is fatal to the experience. We either have to accept the show or turn it off. As a compromise, we can dull our brains with alcohol or pills. I learned this when I found myself enjoying *Thunderball* after the third beer.

Television—including televised sports—makes us all passive and impotent spectators of a fantastic world, which little by little replaces the real world of everyday life. When Homer tells his wife about the early years of their marriage, he is actually recalling a *Father Knows Best* episode. For Homer and for most of us, TV and movies are life, and our colleagues and children are real only insofar as they can absorb the energy and identity of these electronic phantasms. It is the joke about the man who reads *Playboy* and then kicks his wife.

Ray Bradbury saw this coming 40 years ago. In *Fahrenheit 451*, Montag's wife spends her days popping pills and watching soap operas on the three television walls of a room that has absorbed all their spare cash. Now, it is her dream that they can save enough for a fourth wall, completing the picture and shutting out life completely. When Montag interrupts her favorite show, turns off the walls, and forces his wife and her two friends to listen to "Dover Beach," one of the women bursts into tears. "You see?" exclaims the other friend, "poetry and tears, poetry and suicide and crying and awful feelings. . . . Why *do* people want to hurt people? Not enough hurt in the world, you got to tease people with stuff like that!"

But that is Montag's point exactly: to face the reality of suffering and evil. "Go home," he tells her, "and think of your first husband divorced and your second husband killed in a jet and your third husband blowing his brains out, go home and think of that and your damn Caesarian sections, too, and your children who hate your guts." Goethe observed more than once that great art requires a great people capable of appreciating Aeschylus or Shakespeare: "We admire the tragedies of the ancient Greeks. But, to take a correct view of the case, we ought rather to admire the period and the nation in which their production was possible than the individual authors." But turnabout is fair play, and one can only despise and condemn a nation whose art runs the gamut from Seinfeld to Philip Roth, from MTV to Philip Glass.

Media metaphors were a common ploy for the half-baked of 20 or 30 years ago. But if one were to parrot Marshall McCluhan's phrase that the medium is the message, then the alarming significance of electronic culture—of interactive television and virtual reality—is not the violence and pornography but the passivity and helplessness of people who cannot even look something up in a book or stare at a painting long enough for it to come alive. "Oh, but you don't have to do it anymore, since there are computer graphics so perfect that they can bring a seascape right into your living room." No wonder surrogate motherhood is all the rage: all experience these days is surrogate, a manufactured substitute for the real thing.

Another 60's guru, Timothy Leary, mixed media metaphors with real drugs: "Turn on, tune in, and drop out." These days, Leary has more or less given up on drugs and is reprogramming his mind on virtual reality, but the message is the same. We are not strong enough for real life—raw experience, neat whiskey, flesh-and-blood women. Let us have TV, vodka and diet coke, and virtual-reality rape. But if there are any old-fashioned men and women out there, particularly those who might cherish the illusion that there are still symphonies to compose and poems to write, then you must do the opposite of what you are told every day, in school, in church, at work. No machine can make your life better; it can only make you weaker and dependent; there is nothing of value that can be done for you, because it must all be done by you. It is not love or even sex, if someone or something else does all the work. As Lysistra once explained, passive resistance spoils the diet: "A man will never have his pleasure unless he shares it with his woman."

Nietzsche says somewhere that a lame man can mount a horse and ride to the top of a mountain, but when he gets to the top and dismounts, he still limps. All technology, he might have said, was invented to give the illusion of strength to the weak and corrupt. An unathletic accountant can buy a fast car; an ugly woman gets her nose fixed; the lonely guy subscribes to the Playboy channel. An intellectual, who used to spend decades learning history, philosophy, foreign languages, can now afford to major in sociology, and when he needs a piece of information he has only to plug into NEXIS and, *ecco*, an instant expert on what everyone else has been saying. Encyclopedias and reference works are only slightly better, and in their heyday near the end of the last century, such academic paraphernalia enabled the half-educated to write learned articles on Homeric duels or classical allusions in Tennyson. Victoria's poet laureate was not amused and complained bitterly against the bookworms and index-thumbers who committed scholarship against literary forms they could neither write nor understand.

There is a Taoist parable about a man hauling buckets of water out of a well and pouring them onto his field. When Confucius comes along and tells him of a simple device to make the work easier—something like a *shaduf*—the peasant replies that he has heard of such a thing, but his master (that is, a Taoist sage) had told him that it was degrading to be servant to a machine. That, at least, is how I remember the tale. The moral problem of the *shaduf* and all similar devices is that they take a complex human action and reduce it to a mechanical routine that makes the man an extension of the machine. A tool, on the other hand, is a projection of a man's self: a hammer hardens his fist; wheels give speed to his feet; a pencil turns his finger into an appendage of his eye; and the computer on which I am typing this is only a very expensive pencil that puts typists out of work.

A real tool or weapon is a means to making something or doing something inherently noble and useful. A man is no braver for possessing a sword or pistol; indeed, he may be only a bullying coward with superior firepower, but combat is a natural and even heroic enterprise that can ennoble the tools provided by technology. But the technology of war, like the technology of literary composition, is perilous. Military hardware now enables little men in offices to annihilate heroism and wipe entire communities off the map; and the first book I heard of being composed on a word processor was Jimmy Carter's memoirs. If George Bush had been forced into a judicial combat with Saddam Hussein, and if Jimmy Carter had been required to write in pencil, the world would have been spared much inconvenience.

Even useful and honorable tools can become subversive at the point they slip the reins of human capability. Anything you own and use, if you cannot understand its workings, makes you servile, and that includes computers, automobiles, and machine pistols. But a great deal of technology has no other purpose than to render us incompetent. A gas stove is a fine in-

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strument in the hands of a good cook, but a microwave oven is designed to heat up prepared foods, just as television is *designed* to pour someone else's thoughts—already chewed, slobbered, and swallowed—into your head.

"Whatever does not kill me makes me strong." If there is more than a grain of truth in Nietzsche's aphorism, then the reverse might also be true: what does not threaten me can only make me weak, and every technical aid that liberates us from hard work and direct experience reduces us to impotence. I do not say to you, writers and readers both, that you should eschew technology and live in the woods, but that you should judge each technical device on its merits. The most basic criterion ought to be: does the device make it easier to do what I would already be doing or does it create its own forms and demands. Synthesizer music, computer graphics, video games are all saccharine, and the spirit that feeds on them will starve to death. Most cases are not so simple, and the prudent man will have to ask himself: Can I live and work without this tool or have circumstances made it indispensable? I don't like cars, but without one I should have to live as a hermit and give up—well, here in Rockford, nothing except the half hour it would take to walk to the office when it is 25 degrees below zero, but I do drive to Madison and Chicago, and I could never "escape to Wisconsin" (as the bumperstickers advise) without an automobile.

If you enjoy music, you should learn to play the piano or force your children to play, but even for an accomplished amateur a concert is an enjoyable experience. In these times, however, opera and symphony tickets are prohibitively expensive for a family of six, and the choice that confronts us is either musical illiteracy or some dependence upon recordings and videos.

Even in the case of apparently benign technologies, the day comes when you realize that you are now content to play the stereo instead of the piano, that you cannot live without the continuous chatter of Vivaldi in the background. The scholar may find his computer eminently useful, but eventually he may discover that he is spending more time on E-mail communications than on research. The electronic village may turn out to be a real village in the sense that it is populated only by illiterate peasants, and the best advice I can offer the artist in a world increasingly inimical to his very existence is to follow the example of the Pilgrim who left all he had and went off crying "Life."

Turn off, tune out, drop in. c

The Blessed Metaphors

by Tom Disch

They reigned while the brain was still
a little simian, holy presences descending
in strobing flashes of enlightenment, as when
the bosomy Hagia Sofa first proposed
the notion of a stool: three legs in a firm
base and one could sit anywhere;
as when King Solemn divided the Gordian babe
who'd so much baffled her two mothers;
as when the gods of rain and dirt made love
and daisies blossomed, telling their pretty tales.
The nymphs and shepherds make garlands and agree:
Unless you die, you will not live again! And so,
My silly darlings, come—I'll put you in a bowl.

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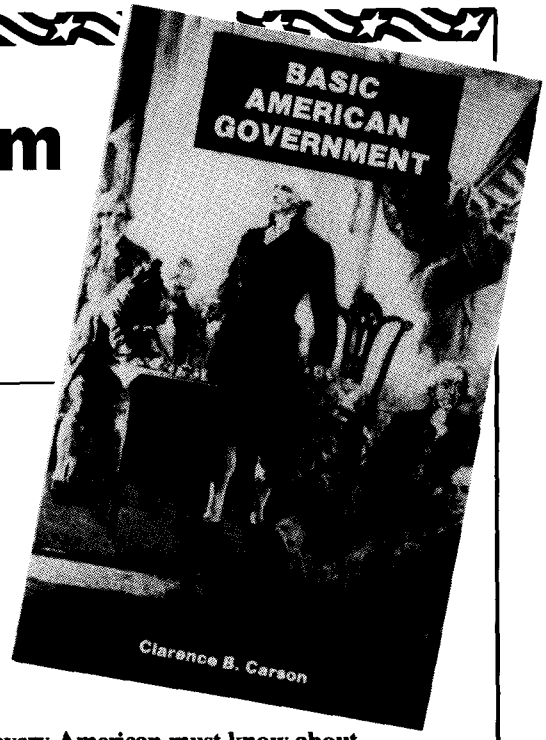

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Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Dear Howard Stern,

I don't care if your New Year's Eve program did set the all-time world record for a pay-for-view TV event. And I don't care, either, if your book is a best-seller and people are lining up around the block to get a signed copy of it. I just want to tell you, in all candor, that you are an ugly person. Ugly, *Ugly*, UGLY. You are as *ugly* as a raw turnip. Ugly as a day-old dog turd. Next to you that fat slob Rush Limbaugh looks like Clark Gable. You are ugly inside and outside both. Quit hiding behind ethnicity. That's no excuse. Your hippie hairdo doesn't do a thing for you, either. Why don't you get smart and go find a good place to hide instead of flaunting your ugliness in the florid face of the American public?

As a member in good standing of the South Carolina Ugly Patrol (an all-volunteer, nonprofit, statewide organization dedicated to the proposition that "Beauty is Truth") I am compelled in good conscience to write to you. . . .

Stop, please. Wait just a minute!

Please forgive me, dear reader. It was not I who wrote the above rude and counterproductive words addressed to one of America's cultural icons and leading celebrities. I, myself, would never do such a thing. True, I might conceivably *think* something like that, but I would never allow myself to give voice and utterance to such negative thoughts. In my opinion it was Towne, John Towne, no more (and no less) than a common character in a novel I once wrote called *Poison Pen* (1986), a fictional figure, then, who has just lately reemerged, all bandaged and stinking, like Lazarus, from the quiet death of that novel to begin again his outrageous and unacceptable shenanigans, his half-assed japes and pasquils, his minstrel-show shucking and jiving, always and forever seeking to give offense not only to the vulnerable and prominent people he has elected to insult, but also, dear readers (if any), to you and to me and to every right-thinking human being from here to Sri Lanka. You may be thinking that I, as a bona fide author of sorts (though never either celebrity or best-seller), ought at the very least to be able to exercise some kind of control over a purely imaginary character whose sole existence (as far as I can tell) is in words on the printed page, whose environment is his text. Maybe so. It just hasn't worked out that way, that's all. He comes and he goes as he pleases. He pops up when least expected. Like some of my tacky, no-account kinfolk. Since he appears to have vanished (for the time being), let us now get down to serious business, to the topic of popular culture, while we can still safely do so.

What a time to be thinking about this subject; what a time to be trying to write about it. My imaginary readers will be reading this piece a couple or three months from now, on the

George Garrett is Henry Hoyns Professor of English at the University of Virginia.

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early teasing edges of springtime. But I am living here and now, composing this text in early January of 1994. It is a frozen, grungy day outside, gray on gray, with clumps of old snow in all directions, and if the weather report is to be believed, more snow on the way. Nothing much going on out there in the neighborhood. Not a dog barking, not a car growling up the hill outside. Not even the demented woodwind noise of the usual black caucus of crows anywhere nearby. Inside I have the newspapers with their annual lists of what's "In" and what's "Out." I gather from the *Washington Post*'s half-serious consideration of the topic that Heidi Fleiss, Janet Malcolm, Donald and Marla, Robert Reich, and many more are in. Evidently, the out basket contains the likes of Joey and Amy, Richard Gere, Catharine MacKinnon, and, to be sure, Clarence Thomas. However, the big news is found a few pages later under the rubric of "Names & Faces." "Michael Does Vegas," says the headline. The brief story tells how Michael Jackson, identified as "beleaguered pop star," appeared in person to watch "a Las Vegas casino pirate show" in the company of the casino owner, somebody named Steve Wynn, together with (are you ready for this?) "junk bond king Michael Milken, along with a phalanx of security guards." "Phalanx," that's a nice touch. In the morning's mail came *Vanity Fair* with its lead article—"Heidi Does Hollywood." Which I don't have to read, anyway, because the Associated Press has a piece in the papers—"Vanity Fair names names in Fleiss story," where I can quickly learn that customer Charlie Sheen "liked to hire a blonde dressed up in a cheerleader outfit who would pretend she had a big game the next day, Fleiss said." My *New York Times* tells me all about a popular new video game, "Police Quest: Open Season," designed and created by Daryl Gates, late of the Los Angeles Police Department.

In short, friends, the world looks to be cuckoo. Bananas . . .

Interruptions flutter a few similar days (like those blowing calendar pages in old-timey movies), grungy, still gray on gray, and I can read in the *Washington Post*, in the front *news* section, mind you, how "ROCK MUSICIAN'S CONVICTION PROMPTS CANCELLATION OF AD ON CONDOM USE." This is a little glitch in the major radio and TV advertising campaign, sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, part of the Department of Health and Human Services, which, in its lofty wisdom "has ordered the immediate withdrawal of its AIDS-prevention public service announcement for radio featuring Red Hot Chili Peppers singer Anthony Kiedis." Seems that this fellow, this spokesperson for clean living and good behavior had earlier been convicted (in a real live courtroom—Fairfax County Circuit Court) of "sexual battery and indecent exposure." Since it is her bailiwick and the buck always stops somewhere, Donna Shalala had to come up with something: "We must not allow a single ad to overshadow the vital lifesaving message in the campaign."

Dear Miz Shalala,

When the poet Marianne Moore, in her poem "In Distrust of Merits," said "Beauty is everlasting and dust is for a time," she said a mouthful. . . .

—Go away, Towne! My readers don't want to listen to you any more. Be reasonable.

—Okay, boss. I was just leaving anyway. May I make one point, though, what I was fixing to say in my letter to Madame Secretary?

—Go ahead, but make it quick.

—Have you ever noticed that our American Presidents, at least the ones of our lifetime, like to surround themselves with people of certain definite types? Roosevelt liked smart-mouth intellectuals; Truman liked laughers and scratchers; Kennedy liked Harvard men and lace-curtain Irish; Johnson liked little bitty short guys like Jack Valenti and Moyers—it made him feel taller than ever; Carter liked undisguised crackers, etc., etc. What's the Clinton pattern?

—Beats me.

—Ugly. He has surrounded himself with some of the most singularly unattractive people ever collected. It makes him feel better about himself, don't you see? Bye-bye. . . .

Where were we? Oh yes, stories in the papers. Well, the big news today, prominently on page one as well as in the "Style" section of the *Washington Post*, is the Lorena Bobbitt trial, just getting underway at historic Manassas. (The San Antonio trial of some of the leftover Branch Davidians gets a lot less attention. No celebrities involved.) The Bobbitt event is described as big-time show business: "About 20 satellite trucks lined the roadway leading to the courthouse yesterday, and vendors turned the walkway into a carnival midway, hawking commemorative T-shirts, boxer shorts, knives, and penis-shaped chocolates."

"What does all this have to do with popular culture in the dear old U.S. of A.?" you ask.

Reader, *this is Popular Culture*. This is what it has come to. And if I get half a chance between interruptions, I am going to try to tell you how and why it has come to pass.

Dear Mrs. Bobbitt,

Looking at your picture in the paper today, my good friend Richard allowed: "Boy, that looks like a woman who would cut your d--- off." He's right, too, but please don't get us wrong. We have just founded a local chapter of the Lorena Bobbitt Marching Society and Fan Club. I thought you would like to know that there are guys who admire and respect you as well as the feminist gals. Today's *Washington Post*, in the "Style" section says (in a subheadline), "As Lorena's Trial Begins, Women Grab Onto a Powerful New Symbol." So? Guys, too. We are grabbing and holding onto our symbols for dear life. . . .

Something happened in the four generations of this century to change forever a popular culture that was essentially local, spontaneous, essentially amateur when compared and contrasted with the present, though modest amounts of money did indeed change hands from time to time. At the beginning of the century only opera singers and stage actors were "stars" in a contemporary sense. Both of those forms, opera and drama, were parts of the national and international popular culture of the time. Both are now merely shadows of themselves. Both are classified as "elitist" entertainment, together with symphony orchestras and art museums, subsidized and supported by taxes and philanthropy. Where in the late 19th century most forms of culture of any kind were local and regional, there was scarcely an American town that did not have at least a theater and an opera house. Now only the largest of cities, and only some of them, still try to continue to enjoy these once-popular arts.

What followed, at first gradually enough, was the development of technology (movies, radio, television, cable television, videos, computer networks), which, by linking us all to-

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gether, like it or not, destroyed most of the earlier kinds of popular culture we had known, replacing these things with professionally controlled production and distribution of products that had only a shadowy relationship to original, authentic popular and folk culture. I can well remember the first time—it was 1947, and I was living in Greenwich Village—that I heard the word *authentic* used in a purely pejorative sense. Anything authentic could be copied and, at the same time, smoothed out and made slick. Things authentic were raw and rough-edged. The supermarket soon replaced the farmer's market and the family grocery store. Same thing in the culture business.

The second great force for change—more powerful in fact than technology; for the shopkeepers of culture; for these folks, then and now, have been only casually interested in research and development, letting others take the real risks of invention, just as, in the artistic sense, the custodians of culture are not interested in the real risks of creation; they hire and fire the creative types—was the discovery that, under controlled conditions, inordinate (not merely excessive, but simply incredible) profits could be made. Here the risks were and are high. It is a breathless gamble, a crapshoot; but enough huge fortunes are made to make the risks not wholly irrational. It really started with the movies and got well under way during the Depression. While the rest of the nation suffered, Hollywood made some money. Not a whole lot, because these first-generation aliens (who might as well have been aliens from outer space for all they knew or cared about things American, our cultural roots or traditions) were not secure enough to wish to call too much attention to themselves. That remained for the next generation. Meantime the Hollywood guys were on our side, more or less, during World War II. Partly because, with good reason, they didn't want the other side to win and partly because, win, lose, or draw, they didn't want to get drafted. They turned their business into a war industry and cranked out propaganda and entertainment, making some good money at the same time. It was here that the makers and purveyors of the new popular culture realized the power of propaganda, covert as well as explicit. And they have used their media for this purpose, with many a hidden agenda ever since.

They were beginning to earn a portion of the one reward they really could not generate or control on their own—respectability. For centuries, ever since the heyday of Rome, show-business people had mostly and often legally been classified as standing well outside the normal hierarchies and patterns of society. They were, as the Elizabethans used to say, "masterless men."

One thing they had done that, slowly but surely, changed things in their favor was to create stars and the star system. The origin was merchandising, but the concept took hold and soon enough meant more than an aid to large-scale buying and selling. Very soon in the game, given the right context, it became possible to create stars possessed of very little, if any talent. Some had some talent, and some didn't. Talent became, finally, irrelevant to stardom. So, soon enough, did other factors like character and integrity. Soon enough the "true" character of a star was irrelevant. This aspect of the star system has proved beneficial to the movers and shakers of the business who have never been noted for sterling character or integrity. By now the second and third generations have been able to step forward and become public figures themselves without risk or shame. Similarly, the star system has spread first to all other shapes and forms of show business and entertainment, but also into all other aspects of our lives, including politics and the professions, all the arts and crafts.

We of my generation (born 1929), and the next two after that, have witnessed these things happening in our time, energized by the demonic power of television, which was only very briefly a genuine competitor and soon developed as just another part of the total package—movies, radio, television, records, publishing, sports, fashion, the news, all of them now, thanks to the fun and games of arbitrage and the irresistible impulse toward mergers, joined together in an indissoluble multinational matrimony. What all this means (among other things) is that popular culture, in these last wild years of this bloody and terrible century, is whatever they say it is, whatever choices they choose to allow us to exercise. It means, too, that the human-scale and communal pleasures of popular culture—movies seen in a real picture palace, vaudeville shows, the music hall, burlesque—are gone for good. Rock concerts and the like, loosely based on the May Day or Nuremberg rallies, don't count, at least in the sense of offering the communal experience. If you want to see where we have come, what we are up to, just consider the last couple of presidential inaugurations.

What all this means is that it is no longer possible to avoid or escape the impact of the mass-produced popular culture. For a very few people in my generation it was, strictly speaking, possible to escape the experience. Not since then. There is no place on earth safely away from it. We cannot spare our children or grandchildren from its, at best, baleful influence.

Not long ago, critic Lee Lescase, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, took serious note of some of the attitudes that link show business (Hollywood) with the government of our nation, hunkered down inside the Beltway: "In other words the image is more important than the reality. In fact there doesn't have to be *any* reality. In a life revolving around prime time, events, even events involving thousands of people, can be arranged solely for the cameras." Really? Take today's paper (*Washington Post*) for example. In the news section we have "As the World Watches on TV, Lorena Bobbitt's Trial Opens." In the "Style" section we learn that not many people, on the scene at least, seem to be as interested as the reporters: "Because so few members of the actual public turned out at the courthouse, the hundreds of journalists were reduced to interviewing T-shirt hawkers ($20 for a 'Love Hurts' shirt autographed by John Bobbitt, himself) . . . "

Years ago, in the 1950's, I worked for television as a writer for a show that died in labor. My first day on the job the producer told me the score: "If you think television has anything to do with art, you're crazy. If you think it's entertainment, you are naive and misinformed. Television is purely and simply an advertising medium [this long before the shopping network]. Your job is purely and simply to write stuff to fill in the time and space between the ads." Years later I have to admit he spoke the truth. During the 1960's, and ever since, they took over the news and information services of television. Nothing has changed since then except that nobody even bothers to apologize anymore for the wealth of misinformation and disinformation and nonsense they solemnly and relentlessly produce and present to us. No wonder that nothing can equal or even approach the contempt that the masters of popular culture feel for the audience they routinely abuse.

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Nevertheless, even though they are desperately few and far between, there are real people and moments in the history of our popular culture that are worthwhile and worthy of honor. Fellini and his works (treated elsewhere in this issue) are surely among these precious few. And you will have your own special favorites and examples, though I am willing to wager that in whatever field you choose to consider, from grand opera to Grand Ole Opry, the honorable few will be very few. And they will be creators and performers, not producers and dealers.

Dear George Garrett,

I was planning to write a letter to Christy Turlington, the supermodel (*it's all about models these days*), and tell her my thrilling life story and see if I can't, you know, like make friends. And I may even do that a little later. But right now I consider it my bounden duty to deal with you.

You certainly sound like a bitter and cynical little old man. Judging by this article of yours, which you in fact have not finished yet, there is no real popular culture in our country anymore (if there ever was any), just a whole lot of mass-produced and -packaged junk. Trash created by trash for trash on all sides and at all levels. Your not-so-subtle subtext seems to be that next to nothing is or can be immune from the AIDS-like viral infection of this *faux* pop culture foisted on us by degenerate and probably subhuman criminals and blatantly designed to appeal to our most bestial and atavistic promptings. Am I right or am I wrong? Let your readers (if any) decide for themselves.

But before we get that far, maybe I can talk you out of publishing this thing. Look, be sensible. You are no Saul Bellow or Philip Roth. That's for sure. You are not even an Updike or a Richard Ford. In the pop culture game of the literary you are a definite benchwarmer. People will say, if they haven't already, that you are just sour and mean-spirited and even jealous of the others, writers like Jay McInerney and Norman Mailer who have earned their stars and wound stripes. They are legitimate public figures. You don't catch them saying bad things about the state of popular culture in America. They are very careful who they criticize. And so should you be.

But, for the sake of argument, let's say you really believe what you've been saying, which, basically, is that the world has gone crazy. So? You noticed that. It has happened in the last decade of every century we know anything about. Believe me, it won't last long. And on the other side of the great millennial divide there is plenty of profit for all, if we just wait patiently for our turn at the trough.

Meanwhile, watch your step. Control yourself. The great thing about popular culture as it's practiced nowadays is that it is altogether disposable and utterly forgettable. If you can't stand Eddie Murphy or Beavis and Butt-head it doesn't matter. Something else, better or worse, the same and different, will be along before you can say Rumpelstiltskin.

Now I better finish this off right away. I don't want to keep my supermodel waiting.

All the best,
John Towne

P.S. You want a second opinion? You're ugly, too.

P.P.S. On second thought, I think I'll write Kate Moss. Her cockney accent is cute, and her belly button is wonderful. I think I may be in love again. ·c·

High Summer

by Tom Disch

When the bluebells have left off blooming
    And the woods are dusty and dry,
It's time to go to the movies
    And switch from Low Cool to Hi.

When all the daffodils have withered
    And the scum is thick on the shore,
Then go where the weather caresses
    In a large department store.

The season of blossoms is fleeting;
    Then comes the wearisome weeks
When even the beaches are beastly
    And the rusty screen door squeaks,

And you sigh for those simpler summers
    When you stayed in the city and drank
Perriers by a recycling fountain
    In the plaza of Chemical Bank.

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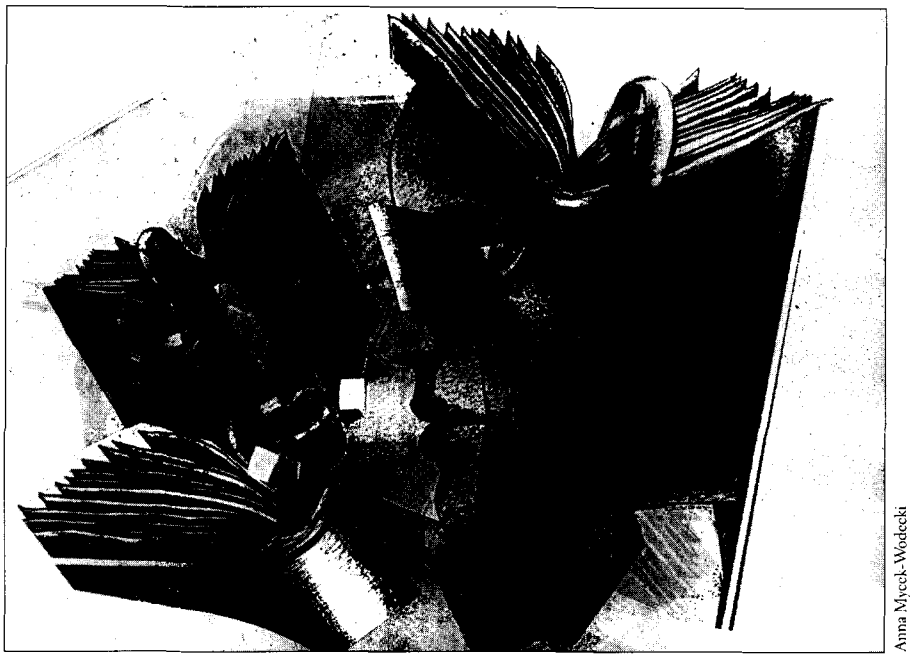
The 40th Anniversary of *Fahrenheit 451*

by Paul A. Trout



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Last year was the 40th anniversary of the publication of *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury's gripping futuristic novel about a dumbed-down American society-of-the-spectacle that pays its "firemen" to burn books. Despite its bleak vision of the future, *Fahrenheit 451* was well reviewed when it appeared, and it soon became ranked with *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as one of the most powerful and alarming dystopias in English—and certainly the best one written by an American. *Fahrenheit 451* has also been popular with the general reader. Since its publication in 1953, it has sold about seven million copies and has never been out of print.

So, where was the anniversary party? Why did this important and riveting novel go virtually unnoticed? National Public Radio remembered the date by interviewing Bradbury one Sunday morning in September, some high school kids—the novel is often taught in secondary schools—created various "451" projects, and Simon & Schuster celebrated by issuing a new anniversary edition, but that was it. Perhaps party hats and helium balloons were too much to expect for a book with such a depressing prognosis, but where were the somber professors and their academic conferences, MLA panels, symposiums, festschriften, and scholarly articles? Hereby hangs an academic tale.

Oddly enough, even during these feverish decades of publish-or-perish, academics have been reluctant to write about *Fahrenheit 451*. The *PMLA* bibliography from 1966 to 1991 (25 years) lists only 12 articles (in English) on the novel—an article every *other* year! By contrast, there are 57 entries for *Brave New World* (475 percent more) and 290 for *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (2,416 percent more). Moreover, 30 of the entries for *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are not for single articles but for entire books, making the discrepancy even more dramatic.

One would think that professional academics imaginative enough to find clever things to say about Petrarchan eroticism in video arcade games and Clint Eastwood as a cultural icon would be able to find tenure-friendly things to say about a dystopian novel that condemns censorship and endorses their own humanistic values and commitments. So why have university scholars given *Fahrenheit 451* the cold shoulder? Because, I think, they do not like what *Fahrenheit 451* says about censorship, especially about the etiology of censorship.

In *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, books are also loathed, feared, and censored, but the censorship comes—one might say—from the top down. In *Brave New World*, censorship is enforced by the Council of World Controllers through an operant-conditioning program that instills an "'instinctive' hatred of books" in its subjects, making the test-tube-hatched citizens "safe from books . . . all their lives." The only people to escape this dehumanizing conditioning are the "Savages" imprisoned behind electrified fences on a remote reservation in New Mexico. It is from this saving remnant that the last Booklover emerges, John, who has read and memorized the *Complete Works of Shakespeare*.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the censorship that sacrifices "freedom" to "happiness" is also imposed by an oligarchy, in this case the "priests of power" within the Party, who use Thought Police, terror, and Newspeak to control every aspect of society. "By 2050—earlier, probably—all real knowledge of the past has been destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron—they'll exist only in Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but actually changed into something contradictory of what they used to be." But even this society has its saving remnant of savages—the working-class proles, who manage to sing, dance, recite doggerel, and read—even if it is state-produced pornography. "If there was hope," Winston Smith realized in the midst of his despair, "*it must* lie in the

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Paul A. Trout is an associate professor of English at Montana State University.

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proles." In both dystopias, then, censorship comes from the top down and is a weapon of the "government" to control a victimized citizenry.

This *Wild Palms* view of censorship is immensely popular with literary academics, most of whom are convinced that the greatest threat to freedom of speech and thought comes from the *government*, not from the people. That's why an ACLU membership letter I received tries to press my academic buttons by focusing exclusively on governmental attacks on the First Amendment:

> President Bush has been in the very forefront of an unrelenting assault on the Bill of Rights and the personal liberties it protects. The assault has been so widespread, on so many issues, that every American who looks to the Bill of Rights for protection must now step forward to preserve it. . . . In fact, the consistent pattern of attacks on personal liberties that George Bush has championed shows that *it is up to people like you and me to stand up and defend our precious liberties ourselves.*

To the discomfiture of many literary intellectuals, however, *Fahrenheit 451* advances a startlingly different and "offensive" view of the etiology of censorship. In *Fahrenheit 451*, censorship comes *not* from the top down, but from the bottom up. When the novel begins, of course, the social mechanism for burning books has been institutionalized for decades. "Monday burn Millay, Wednesday Whitman, Friday Faulkner, burn 'em to ashes, then burn the ashes." But Beatty, the fire chief, explains that censorship was not imposed by an oligarchy on an unwilling populace of victimized citizens but was the Will of the People. As the population grew, he explains, the people fractured into more and more subgroups or "minorities," each jealously guarding its own special interest and demanding an insult-free existence. As a result, writers, TV producers, textbook committees, filmmakers, teachers all began to walk on eggs, to censor themselves and to create only innocuous material:

> Don't step on the toes of the dog lovers, the cat lovers, doctors, lawyers, merchants, chiefs, Mormons, Baptists, Unitarians, second-generation Chinese, Swedes, Italians, Germans, Texans, Brooklynites, Irishmen, people from Oregon or Mexico.
>
> All the minor minor minorities with their navels to be kept clean. Authors, full of evil thoughts, lock up your typewriters. They *did*. Magazines became a nice blend of vanilla tapioca. Books, so the damned snobbish critics said, were dishwater. *No wonder* books stopped selling, the critics said. But the public, knowing what it wanted, spinning happily, let the comic books survive. And the three-dimensional sex magazines, of course.

The people got what they wanted: a happy-face culture in which nobody would have their exquisitely sensitive feelings offended by idea or word:

> You must understand that our civilization is so vast that we can't have our minorities upset and stirred. Ask yourself, What do we want in this country, above all? People want to be happy, isn't that right? Haven't you heard it all your life? I want to be happy, people say. Well, aren't they? Don't we keep them moving, don't we give them fun?

To make sure that everybody stays happy and content, any book that might upset any member of any ethnic, racial, or ideological group must be incinerated:

> Colored people don't like *Little Black Sambo*. Burn it. White people don't feel good about *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Burn it. Someone's written a book on tobacco and cancer of the lungs? The cigarette people are weeping? Burn the book. Serenity, Montag. Peace, Montag.

This serenity is so appreciated that a grateful public calls the firemen "Happiness Boys." The people recognize that the book-burning firemen stand between them and a "small tide" of misfits who want to make "everyone unhappy with conflicting theory and thought." The redoubtable fire chief urges the wavering Montag to hold firm: "We have our fingers in the dike. Hold steady. Don't let the torrent of melancholy and drear philosophy drown our world. We depend on you. I don't think you realize how important *you* are, we are, to our happy world as it stands now."

A FEW WORDS ON *FAHRENHEIT 451* BY ITS AUTHOR

At the outset I must admit that this is probably the most outrageous piece of logrolling you have laid eyes on in a generation. Yet, reading over Professor Trout's essay, I gave in to temptation and herewith add my analysis and recommendation. I do so mainly because we have moved quietly, and sometimes not so quietly, into the dim years of political correctness, in which we put silencers not only on guns but on mouths. Someone said to me recently, aren't you afraid? No, I said, I never react in fear; I react in anger. As with graffiti, you must counterattack within the moment, not a day, a month, or a year later. All the politically correct terrorists must be driven back into the stands. There is no place for them in the open field of democratic ballplaying. There is room only for Kipling and his Empire, Mark Twain and his Nigger Jim, Dickens and his Fagin, Shakespeare and his Shylock, and Conan Doyle's Holmes, opiate needle in hand.

I did not, 40 years ago, predict. I observed tendencies or wrote doubts. Today, there is no fear of book-burners, only nonteachers and nonreaders, which means no need of books and so no burning.

I will not press these observations further. Professor Trout has done the job for me. And, since you are a reader—read on.

—Ray Bradbury

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So, in *Fahrenheit 451*, censorship is not imposed by a sinister elite of power-mad corporate managers or apparatchiks but is the will of the common people themselves:

> There you have it, Montag. It didn't come from the Government down. There was no dictum, no declaration, no censorship, to start with, no! Technology, mass exploitation, and minority pressure carried the trick, thank God. Today, thanks to them, you can stay happy all the time, you are allowed to read comics, the good old confessions, or trade journals.

Whether the First Amendment is shredded by contending and jealous racial, ethnic, and ideological groups or made otiose by a dumbed-down populace, the real enemy of freedom in *Fahrenheit 451* is not some centralized authority but ourselves.

Bradbury's story-crime in *Fahrenheit 451*, then, is not to have blamed *government* for censorship but, in the words of Jack Zipes (a Marxist literary critic and just about the only academic to confront the theme of censorship in this novel), to have "shift[ed] the blame" to "the people, i.e., the masses, [who have] brought this upon themselves and almost deserve to be blown up so that a new breed of book-lovers may begin to populate the world." What upsets Zipes (and other literary academics, I suspect) is that Bradbury's novel exonerates "the state and private industry from crimes against humanity and places the blame for destructive tendencies in American society on the masses of people who allegedly want to consume and lead lives of leisure dependent on machine technology." As far as Zipes is concerned, Bradbury has "an *inaccurate* notion of what led the 'bad old' society to become fascist and militaristic" (italics added). The novelist's illiberal, elitist notion that the "masses" themselves will subvert their own freedom is "false," "distorted," and "regressive"—in short, politically incorrect.

Zipes, of course, got it wrong. Bradbury's "false" and "distorted" depiction of the etiology of censorship has more credibility and relevance now than it did 40 years ago. Every day there is more evidence that free expression is being whittled away not just by Big Bad Government but by a "rainbow coalition" of ethnic, racial, and political "minorities," each contending with each other for turf in the culture and campus wars and each hell-bent on suppressing any form of expression that gives the slightest offense. Without shame, academics now ask, "Can We Live with the First Amendment?" (as they did in a conference ad in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* last September).

In the current cultural climate, just about anything that is said, written, performed, displayed, or published will offend someone—and this is now excuse enough to suppress it. A satiric cartoon portraying politicians as fat, greedy hedonists was attacked not by the politicians it defamed but by a gallery visitor—a "woman of size"—who was offended by greed being equated with fatness. The gallery, denying this was censorship, took down the painting. *Show Boat* was recently attacked because some African-Canadian and African-American groups found its sympathetic and honest portrayal of blacks in the age of steamboats as poor and oppressed to be demeaning. Wiccans try to get the works of Roald Dahl out of school libraries because of his unflattering portrayal of witches. A student who called inconsiderate students "water buffalo" was deemed to have offended racial harassment codes. A professor who invited racists to address his class on tolerance and intolerance was attacked by administrators, colleagues, and students (*not* the ones in his class) for tolerating racist and insensitive speech, apparently something not to be tolerated from a professor who teaches about tolerance. The founding editor of *Peace Magazine*, Metta Spencer, attacked the *Toronto Globe and Mail* for publishing a book review that contained a description of self-mutilation, arguing that printing "the details of this violence . . . should be made a punishable act." *Huckleberry Finn* (*Little Black Sambo* long ago disappeared down the memory hole) was removed from high school reading lists for being "morally insensitive," "degrading," and "destructive to black humanity." As one high school administrator put it, "There's simply no reason to use books that offend minorities if other books may be used instead."

Of course this assault on freedom in the name of sensitivity has been going on for decades. When William Shockley was invited to talk at Yale in 1974, a student wrote that he was "dismayed" by Shockley's "lack of sensitivity to others." The "feelings and dignity" of students should *not* be "sacrificed" on the "altars of freedom of speech and academic freedom." Bradbury was right—people themselves will whittle away their own freedoms until all that is left is tinder for firemen.

Perhaps even more alarming than these *ad hoc* instances of suppression is the vigorous theoretical assault against the First Amendment coming from some "cutting-edge" intellectuals. I am thinking, for instance, of Stanley Fish and his notorious and thought-provoking essay "There's No Such Thing as Free Speech—and It's a Good Thing, Too," which he has now expanded into a book with the same title. To create a compassionate community, campus leaders across the nation have pushed for speech codes to suppress anything that a self-defined "victim" deems "insensitive," "offensive," "harassing," "stigmatizing," or "politically repugnant." Law professors have facilitated this attack on constitutionally protected speech by contending that freedom of speech has been unjustly "privileged" over other and more important rights, such as the right to be unoffended. A law professor from the University of Oregon, for example, has argued that "our fixation on rights is dysfunctional and deranged," especially our fixation on First Amendment rights. This point of view has also been advanced by Leroy Martin, police superintendent in Chicago, who argues that "we need to take a look at [the Constitution] and, maybe from time to time, we should curtail some of those rights." As Judge Learned Hand explained, "liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it." If we do not watch out, the government may heed our braying against freedom, as it did in *Fahrenheit 451*.

In the alchemy of our souls, almost all noble attributes—courage, hope, love, faith, beauty, loyalty—can be transmuted into ruthlessness. As Lionel Trilling warned, "we must be aware of the dangers which lie in our most generous wishes." It is hard to believe that a virtue as exalted as *compassion*—tenderness of heart—can be carried too far, but it can. As John Sparrow wrote in *Too Much of a Good Thing*, "it is difficult to see how any . . . civilized society could survive if the doctrines of pure humanitarianism were consistently applied. . . . A man who cannot face the fact of suffering cannot meet his responsibilities as a member of society." Too much compassion leads not only to paralysis but also to coercion. Life is rough and it

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requires us to be thick-skinned and *desensitized* to the many cultural allergens around us. Alarmed by attacks on free thought in the name of "sensitivity," Jonathan Rauch, in *Kindly Inquisitors* (1993), reminds compassionate professors, students, and administrators that freedom of speech compels us to go against our natures, to hear unpleasant and even hateful things, to tolerate unpleasant and even hateful people:

> We would like to think that knowledge could be separated from hurt. We would all like to think that painful but useful and thus "legitimate" criticism is objectively distinguished from criticism which is merely ugly and hurtful. Surely criticism is one thing, and "Hitler should have finished the job" is another. But what we would like to think is not so: the only such distinction is in the eye of the beholder. The fact is that even the most "scientific" criticism can be horribly hurtful, devastatingly so. . . . In the pursuit of knowledge many people—probably most of us at one time or another—will be hurt, and this is a reality which no amount of wishing or regulating can ever change. It is not good to offend people, but it is necessary. A no-offense society is a no-knowledge society.

Leon Botstein has said that cultural debate is now so rowdy and debased that "the only honest way to deal with it is to remain silent." This is wrong; we must never abandon our right, indeed our moral duty, to speak out in protest. Bradbury warns us where silence leads when he has his now-jobless English professor, Faber, say to Montag:

> Montag, you are looking at a coward. I saw the way things were going, a long time back. I said nothing. I'm one of the innocents who could have spoken up and out when no one would listen to the "guilty," but I did not speak and thus became guilty myself. And when finally they set the structure to burn the books, using the firemen, I grunted a few times and subsided, for there were no others grunting or yelling with me, by then. Now it's too late.

It is time, I believe, for English professors, and others, to confront *Fahrenheit 451*'s offensive and prescient message: that freedom will be incinerated in the name of happiness and sensitivity and that we ourselves will direct the flame.

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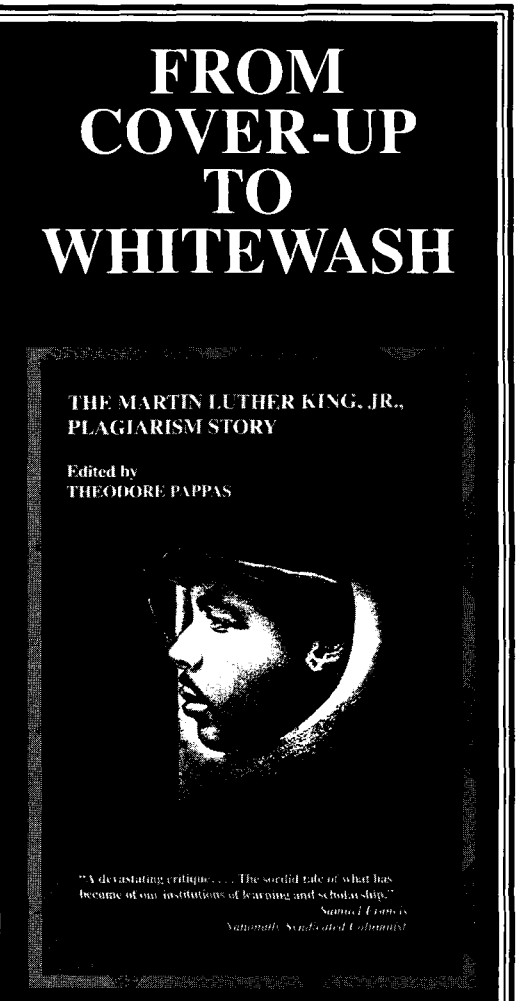

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Federico Fellini and the White Clowns

by R.H.W. Dillard

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Near the beginning of Federico Fellini's *Intervista* (1988), a very large camera crane is about to rise, wreathed in smoke and artificial moonlight, high above the soundstages of Cinecittà. One of the camera operators calls down to his director (Fellini being played by Fellini), "Aren't you coming up?" "No," Fellini immediately replies, "I can imagine it from here." The cameraman shrugs, turns to his colleague on the crane, and says, "What did I tell you?"

That brief exchange about sums it up: both the distinctive personal, imaginative, and visionary quality of Fellini's cinema and, at the same time, the response of his detractors, who for years have claimed that his work is composed of predictable and repetitive fantasies, without experiential, intellectual, or ideological content. But, in fact, the only truly predictable thing about Fellini's films over the years was the response of the critics, repeating in chorus "What did I tell you?" or perhaps a Reaganesque "There you go again."

Ideologues and social (as well as socialist) realists have always been uncomfortable with Fellini, so it came as no great surprise when on the day of Fellini's death National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* trotted out an insignificant critic named Stefan Scheiss (or something very like that) to denounce him, to declare that he was without artistic or social importance, to aver that his work had no influence on the history and development of film art, and generally to "dis" him. After all, Shorty Shrift (or whoever) was just joining a long line of attackers from the right and the left who have accused Fellini of not being politically correct. He was subject throughout his career to Church interference and censorship on the one hand and, on the other, to attacks in the press from Marxist intellectuals, which even led on occasion to actual brawls, such as the one that followed Franco Zeffirelli blowing a noisy whistle to disrupt the ceremonies awarding *La Strada* a Silver Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1954.

Fellini, however, discovered the best way of dealing with his pompous critics: he simply wrote them into his films, made them a part of that cinematic world they despised so much. Think of the sterile intellectuals in his films, the infanticidal Steiner in *La Dolce Vita* (1959) or the French intellectual Daumier in *8-1/2* (1963) who urges the director Guido Anselmi to achieve that purest of artistic expressions—silence. (Both of them, by the way, in look and behavior, are clearly allusions to Hjalmar Poelzig, played by Boris Karloff in Edgar G. Ulmer's *The Black Cat* [1935], the intellectual architect who lives in a cold, bare, modernist mansion built on the ruins of the fortress he betrayed in the First World War and who murders his beautiful young wives and preserves them in glass cases to be perfect forever.) Or, in a lighter vein, think of the gloating reporter in *8-1/2* who gleefully says of Guido, "He's lost! He has nothing to say!" Or the woman who says offscreen during the credits of *City of Women* (1980), "With Marcello, again? Please, Mae-

R.H.W. Dillard is a professor of English at Hollins College in Hollins College, Virginia.

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stro!" Or in *The Clowns* (1970), Fellini himself, over whose head a glue-filled bucket suddenly drops, just as he is about to tell an inquiring journalist what the "message" of his film is. So it doesn't really matter what Swinger Shift (or whatever) said on NPR; Fellini had already put him in the right place on the great screen of his imagining.

But what does matter is the great difference between the response of Fellini's detractors and that of his enormous and enthusiastic audience—perhaps most clearly stated recently by another visionary filmmaker, David Lynch. "He's just the greatest filmmaker in history in my book," Lynch said in the January 1994 issue of *Interview*. "He really understood cinema and all the magical things it can do."

Fellini has always had a large international audience. His films have won four Oscars for Best Foreign Language Film (more than any other director), and he was given an Oscar for his life's work just last year. His influence on other filmmakers is large and international, ranging from Akira Kurosawa to Juzo Itami to Lina Wertmüller to Ken Russell to Bill Forsyth to David Lynch. Ingmar Bergman's *Hour of the Wolf* (1968) and *Face to Face* (1976) were both strongly influenced by Fellini's *Juliet of the Spirits* (1965). *8-1/2* has essentially been remade (without credit) at least three times: by Paul Mazursky as *Alex in Wonderland* (1970), by Bob Fosse as *All That Jazz* (1979), and by Woody Allen as *Stardust Memories* (1980). And could Robert Altman ever have made *The Player* (1992) without Fellini's having shown the way?

What, then, is there about Fellini's films that causes the Stepin Shiftits among the intellectually and ideologically correct so much trouble? First, Fellini was an artist who depended upon individual and particular vision and expression rather than politically codified generalities and stereotypes. There is nothing by today's intellectual standards more offensive (to use a favorite word of the politically correct) than a belief in and commitment to the individual. We are informed by poststructuralists that the individual does not even exist, that it is the culture as a whole that speaks through the individual who is merely a conduit for the culture's expression. (Substitute the word "state" for the word "culture" in their writings, and you'll quickly discover why they seem so hauntingly familiar.) We are also informed by deconstructionists that expression itself does not exist, that every decoding is a new encoding, and that the very idea of artistic expression is just another illusion. And so on and so on, each intellectual or ideological coterie imposing its position upon the others and, alas, upon us all.

As Fellini's films progressed from the relatively realistic forms of *Variety Lights* (1950) and his other early films to the radical forms of the films following *8-1/2*—especially those imaginary documentaries like *The Clowns*, *Roma* (1972), and *Intervista*—his commitment to an exploration of his own way of seeing remained constant. Not since the later Dietrich films of Josef von Sternberg—*The Scarlet Empress* (1934) and *The Devil Is a Woman* (1935)—has a director transformed the interior of a soundstage into such a completely personal reality. Fellini was an artist determined to reveal his full vision as vividly and completely as possible, to discover the universal in the particular. "I don't want to demonstrate anything," he said, "I want to show it." He would agree with William James that the individual consciousness is "the workshop of being where we catch fact in the making," and certainly James's description of Wordsworth is applicable to Fellini: "that inner life of his carried the burden of a significance that has fed souls of others, and fills them to this day with inner joy."

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Second, Fellini was a Christian—an unorthodox one, granted, in trouble with Catholic dogmatists off and on throughout his career, but a genuine Christian believer. He did not believe in the perfectibility of humankind by social, psychological, medical, political, or any other strictly human means. Rather, he believed that all humans are sinners, that all are capable of redemption, and that Providence moves in the world to provide the means of that redemption. His films are filled with angels in unlikely human forms: clowns and tightrope walkers, whores on the beach and lovely blonde young actresses who can play the saxophone, smiling young women who have come to the city to be typists and sexy, smiling feminist terrorists who shoot holes in the ballooning sexist fantasies of bumbling Don Juans. Even a life-size mechanical doll brings a glimmer of salvation to a thoroughly despicable Giacomo Casanova in *Casanova* (1976). "Good luck to Guido," the neurotic young intellectual played by Barbara Steele says in *8-1/2*, and even the Mafioso in *Ginger and Fred* (1985) has his moment of grace when he wishes good luck to Pippo and Amelia in the darkened television studio. *Ginger and Fred* and *Intervista* both take place at Christmas with Christmas greetings managing to transcend the ugliness and loss of values in the world in which they are uttered.

His films are, therefore, comic, even at their darkest. "Remember that this is a comic film," read the note attached to the camera during the filming of *8-1/2*, and Dante, the divine comedian, is a presence in so many of the films from *La Dolce Vita* on. Even those among his characters who seem to reject redemption—Marcello Rubini in *La Dolce Vita* and the title characters in *Toby Dammit* (1968) and *Casanova*—are treated by Fellini with a gentleness that can only be a product of his genuinely forgiving and loving nature. His attitude toward his characters and their sinful natures is not, then, available or congenial to those who self-righteously proclaim their own virtue while eagerly condemning the failings of others.

Third, Fellini's films are politically and socially honest, rather than correct. His films have always been anti-fascist while at the same time admitting the deep Italian involvement in (or indifference to) fascism. Unlike Bernardo Bertolucci's films in which the fascists are psychotics, like Marcello in *The Conformist* (1971), or seem almost to have come from another planet, like Attila in *1900* (1977), Fellini's fascists are the people next door or even yourself. Titta, the semi-autobiographi-

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cal central character in *Amarcord* (1973), wears his fascist youth uniform proudly if not very seriously, and Rubini, the actor hired to play the young Fellini in *Intervista*, snaps into the fascist salute as easily as everyone around him. *Orchestra Rehearsal* (1979) and *And the Ship Sails On* (1983) don't so much condemn any one side as they reveal the tragic absurdity of having to take sides. No wonder that politically committed critics disapprove so strongly of his films. Being without sin, they are always willing to cast the first stone, apparently not knowing, as Fellini does, that stones can hurt.

Socially, his films are just as honest. "Why do you always have prostitutes in your films?" a reporter asks Guido in 8-1/2. Fellini, perhaps in imitation of Christ and certainly to the consternation of ideologues of both the left and the right, did concern himself with the lives of prostitutes and others who live the low (as opposed to the sweet) life, and almost all of his films concern the near impossibility of honest and equal relationships between men and women. No director has (with the possible exception of Ingmar Bergman) shown more consistently the intensity of the anger and fear that men and women are capable of generating in each other. *Juliet of the Spirits* is perhaps the finest film concerned with a woman who is abandoned by her husband, only to find that the experience is actually a liberation. And *City of Women* is, to my knowledge, the only film to explore the confusion of lust and fear that defines contemporary male responses to liberated women. What separates these films from their ideological counterparts (in which women discover that they have no need for or interest in the company of men or men discover their primitive masculine identity by pounding drums around a fire far from women, like comic versions of Edgar Rice Burroughs' apes performing the Dum-Dum) is that Fellini really loved women. Dreaming of a time "when men and women feel so naturally emancipated that they can meet each other in a naturally relaxed state," he nevertheless knew that such a time is a long way off and that love, betrayal, and forgiveness must remain natural allies in all caring relationships between the sexes.

Fourth, Fellini the artist sprang from popular culture and used it in the creation of his art, while recognizing its essential barbarism and its real dangers. When asked to name films that he admired or that influenced him, he was more likely to mention the American films of his childhood—*Frankenstein* (1931) or *King Kong* (1933) or the comedies of Chaplin, Keaton, and the Marx Brothers—than the highly regarded films of his European contemporaries. His films were regularly peopled by circus performers and vaudevillians, street performers and bit players. When the stars did show up, the poets and actors in *Fellini Satyricon* (1969), the celebrities and beautiful people in *La Dolce Vita* and *Toby Dammit*, the opera singers in *And the Ship Sails On*, they were shown to be clowns, too—only sadder and more pathetic than the real clowns because they were blinded by self-regard and fame.

But he also recognized the pernicious leveling of values in the modern world caused by advertising and television. From *La Dolce Vita* on, he showed the omnipresence of tabloid journalism and television to be the first sign of the return of the barbarians to the gates of Rome. Giulietta's husband in *Juliet of the Spirits* bids good evening to the face on the television with far more feeling and warmth than he shows to any living person in the film—especially to Giulietta. At the end of *Intervista*, the film crew is attacked by Indians (more European barbarian than American), whose spears are television antennae. In *Amarcord*, Gradisca wastes the actual possibilities of her youth while looking for a perfect and unattainable Gary Cooper, and, during the funeral procession for Titta's mother, the cortege passes large posters featuring Norma Shearer and Laurel and Hardy. Fellini knew that already in the 1930's the reality of the tangible moment was being infected by the intangible imagery of modern technology and that Mussolini and Hitler were very real and dangerous products of that infection. Even Dante was not immune; his head, with the top sheared off and filled with soup, appears on a large advertising poster in the tobacco shop where Titta's sexual dreams are fulfilled in overwhelming ways he is unable to deal with.

In *Ginger and Fred*, Fellini makes the point most fully. Not only does a puppet Dante in a television commercial find his way out of the dark wood using a compass (and thereby miss his trip to revelation as well), but the modern cult of celebrity with its absurd blurring of values and meaning is at the center of the comedy. "Why is a convicted Mafioso appearing on a television show with artists?" Amelia asks, to be answered by a Queen Elizabeth look-alike who is also scheduled to appear on the show. "He's a star, too." The Bobbitts would be on that show, also, if it were being broadcast today. Fellini, a child of popular culture, knew its limitations in a way that his intellectually snobbish detractors like Signor Squazzi Scitti on NPR do not, for they are sure that they, too, are *stars*!

Federico Fellini, for all those reasons, then, despite the astonishing beauty of his images and the depth of his feeling for humankind, must remain forever beyond the comprehension or appreciation of those who, bound by ideological or intellectual abstractions, have neither ears to hear nor eyes to see. And what they are missing is what all those people who claim that he never made a love story miss: the simple truth that all of Fellini's films were and are love stories, are acts of love. They must be understood with a lover's comprehension, and, if they are, they will feed your soul and fill you with inner joy.

By the way, for those of you who take offense at my vulgar and insensitive jokes at the expense of the noted critic Steven Shiftless, I advise you to read Fellini's brilliant essay "Why Clowns?" in *Fellini on Fellini* (1974), in which he explains that when a slovenly Auguste clown (the fool) is confronted with the purity and idealism and authoritarianism of an elegant White Clown, he has no choice but "to dirty his pants, get drunk, roll about on the floor, and put up endless resistance." I confess to being such a fool, and I assure you that Mr. Shaft is an archetypal White Clown. With all the wisdom of the fools, Stephen, here's a big honker for you from Federico!

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Come Home, America

Rock and Roll in Middle Age

by Bill Kauffman

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Unanesthetized amputation cannot be more painful than enduring—no, "endurin'"—a Bruce Springsteen monologue about "growin' up." Stopping a concert dead in its tracks, he'll mumble and stammer and "uh, like" his way through a tortured and tortuous tale peopled with Wild Billy and Sloppy Sue and, best of all, "there was this guy." He shoots for Jack Kerouac describing Dean Moriarty but sounds more like a 13-year-old from North Jersey imagining the lives of the freaks he saw in Greenwich Village on a school trip last fall.

But sometimes he gets it right, as at a show in Greensboro, North Carolina, some years back. "I used to think that once I got out of my hometown [Freehold, New Jersey], I was never goin' to come back. But as I got older, I'd come home off the road and get in my car and drive back into town. . . . I realized that I would always carry a part of that town with me." He then lit into "My Hometown," an aching ballad about a young couple contemplating a move from their decaying Northeastern city to the Sunbelt.

Bruce Springsteen, the next Dylan in the 70's, the oversold American avatar in the 80's, has fallen fast and hard as rock-and-roll stars do. The double album he released in 1992 after a five-year silence sunk to the nether regions of the charts. It yielded one lame single, "Human Touch," which never broke through the rap-dominated ice. Critics, heretofore adoring, have turned on Springsteen with bile and condescension, like the high-school geek made good who pulls into a service station and gloats as the broken-down quarterback washes his windshield. (Never underestimate the lingering effect of high-school slights. The witty buffoon David Lee Roth, former lead singer of Van Halen, once said that the reason most rock critics like the angry poindexter Elvis Costello is that most rock critics *look* like Elvis Costello.)

The most common complaint, aired by the most common of critics, the compulsively unreadable Jon Pareles in the *New York Times*, was that "for Springsteen the only community that is left is his family." He'd constructed "a fortress for a family man, a defense against . . . rootlessness and moral ambiguity." The man who declared, on his breakthrough album *Born to Run*, "it's a town full of losers and I'm pullin' out of here to win" had withdrawn to a fastness impervious even to the great god television, which, "in the blessed name of Elvis," he'd blasted to bits with a .44 magnum in "57 Channels (And Nothin' On)."

Springsteen's America, which once stretched from the Jersey turnpike to "a rattlesnake speedway in the Utah desert," has contracted to a dimension the size of his household. He has a wife and kids, and the rest of the world can go to hell. This is true of all the best aging mainstream singer-songwriters: John Mellencamp, Bob Seger, Don Henley. "Lather was 30 years old today; they took away all his toys," trilled Grace Slick of the 60's psychedelic rockers Jefferson Airplane, and though Gracie herself keeps singing into her fifth decade, Lather's parents had a point.

Rock and roll is music of the open road (though Kerouac himself much preferred jazz); cars rank second only to girls as the poet's [*sic*] muse. This is the Whitman/Thomas

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Bill Kauffman is author of a novel, Every Man a King, *and a travel book,* Country Towns of New York.

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Wolfe/Beat/Huck and Jim rafting down the Mississippi America, the country of yea-singing exuberant cowboy loners like the one Sal Paradise met in a Nebraska diner. As Bill Carter of the English band Screaming Blue Messiahs understood: "I think driving is the last form of freedom—I'm surprised the government lets you drive at all." (With the autophobic Al Gore and his censorious wife Tipper in the saddle, the SBM nightmare has arrived.) Anyway, Neil Young insists that it's better to burn out than to fade away, and fortysomethings who watch their speedometers ought to consider another line of work.

Rock and roll is and has always been "conservative-anarchist," as *Rolling Stone* perceptively terms James Hetfield, leader of the wildly popular Metallica. For teenagers, it is about free-swinging against the Organization Men you want desperately not to grow up to be; by the time you hit your mid-30's, you realize that Men in Grey Flannel Suits run this world, that "goin' to Katmandu," as Bob Seger daydreams, is not an option, and that trying "to fill this house with all the love that heaven will allow," as Springsteen sings, is a noble enough deed. The bridge between rebellion and contented domesticity is where most of the good stuff is found.

Rock is also the only medium through which young uneducated Middle American white kids can tell the world what they're thinking. The major rock factories are run by older educated non-Middle American guys, which is why most of what we hear on the radio is confected garbage. ("Hang the DJ," demanded Morrissey of the Smiths, but the executives at Columbia and Epic are more deserving of the rope.)

If a kid is too honest he'll be whipped in the public square for hate crimes, as was Axl Rose of the notorious (and, by working- and middle-class white kids, beloved) Guns n' Roses. Rose made the mistake of eschewing Baby I Love You boilerplate and writing the autobiographical "One in a Million," a song recounting his reaction, as a scuzzy teenager from Lafayette, Indiana, upon alighting in the Los Angeles bus depot:

> Police and niggers
> That's right! Get out of my way
> Don't need to buy none of your gold chains today
> . . . . . .
> Immigrants and faggots
> they make no sense to me
> they come to our country
> and think they'll do as they please
> Like start some mini Iran
> or spread some f---ing disease
> . . . . . .
> I'm just a small town white boy
> just trying to make ends meet
> . . . . . .

When I was in my early 20's I made a similar journey, circumnavigating the country by bus. I slept in stations and ate in soup kitchens and wrote execrable poetry. I remember the station in Los Angeles, its rank air of menace and debauchery, in which I found a certain raffish charm. I thought I was an outlaw, lying in the gutter and looking at the stars. I was never a metal-head or racist but I understand Axl Rose, and if I hadn't had the elemental frankness educated out of me I'd have said the same things as I bounded from the bus into that panhandling, purse-snatching man-swarm.

John Mellencamp, a kind of cut-rate Midwestern Springsteen who hit his stride in the mid-80's and surpassed his model, made a series of albums about life in a hinterlands Indiana that was adrift somewhere between the idyllic world of *Hoosiers* and the Doritos and Old Milwaukee world of ratty sofas sagging under the heft of washed-up jocks and cheerleaders paralyzed by their postadolescent failures and blinded by the blue flicker of the television. "I was born in a small town," sang Mellencamp. "My parents live in the same small town. My job is so small town, provides little opportunity." Mellencamp later acted in and directed a movie, *Falling from Grace* (1992), in which he plays a famous singer returning to his Indiana hometown. His blonde dream Southern California wife (Mariel Hemingway) mocks his "hick-town fantasies" and so, eventually, did the city-slicker critics once the brief Common Man Rock fad of the 80's died and Mellencamp decamped to the remainder bins.

Mellencamp's kindred soul Springsteen mourned his Freehold: "Main Street's whitewashed windows and vacant stores / Seems like there ain't nobody wants to come down here no more / They're closin' down the textile mill across the railroad track / Foreman says these jobs are goin' boys, and they ain't comin' back to your hometown."

You can't help but snicker when you read these lyrics. John and Bruce are loaded—John has a Hilton Head mansion, Bruce bought a $14 million Beverly Hills estate. Bruce has pretty much relinquished his Working Class Hero role: he had a quickie marriage to and divorce from an airhead model (though he redeemed himself by marrying an ugly Italian-American girl); he fired his band, several members of which go way back to the Asbury Park days; he no longer lives in his fabled New Jersey. Mellencamp, trapped by his image as John the good-hearted scrapegrace from Seymour, Indiana, pleaded pathetically to *Esquire* in 1992: "You could do me a favor and tell people I'm not the keeper of small towns. I grew up to be the guy I hated as a kid. I'm a cliché."

The thing is, he's not. Neither is Springsteen. They tell the truth, in their prosaic Dairy Queen American way. The only help-wanted listings in my local paper that pay well ($20,000 plus per annum) are for government work: cook at Attica Prison, assistant to the Genesee County manager. Really good jobs—say, superintendent of Batavia schools—won't even be advertised locally, on the assumption that we are Ph.D.-less morons incapable of overseeing the education of our own fourth-graders. A man who bakes potatoes for "Son of Sam" is paid double what the woman behind the counter at the local diner makes. A K Street shyster takes in a quarter of a million representing foreign governments. And you tell me you don't believe we're on the eve of destruction?

The younger political consultants pour over rock lyrics with the misguided diligence of a subliterate, born-again, reformed tart combing her daughter's English class copy of *Slaughterhouse Five* and counting the f-words. Reagan's flunkies sought to co-opt Mellencamp and Springsteen and were rebuffed. Indeed, Springsteen, the night after being praised publicly by Ronald Reagan in the fall of 1984, dedicated "Johnny 99," his narrative of a laid-off autoworker robbing a liquor store, to the President. (Johnny Cash later recorded the tune, and the circle was unbroken.)

Norman Podhoretz, who could politicize a Little League game, read the lyric sheet to *Born in the U.S.A.* and concluded that "these lyrics could have been written in the 1930's by

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a left-wing folksinger like Woody Guthrie—who, as it happens, is one of Springsteen's heroes." Well, Woody Guthrie wrote a few good songs, notwithstanding his affection for Uncle Joe Stalin, and as an Oklahoma vagabond he knew more of American life than, say, your very average pale Manhattan polemicist.

One of the mysteries of Bill Clinton's presidency is how so shrewd a pol could adopt so aggressively vapid a theme song: Fleetwood Mac's "Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow," with its relentlessly upbeat and maddening refrain. An English band, a jejune song: perfect for the boy whose upbringing means so little to him that he allowed his media doctors to graft a phony hometown with a felicitous name—Hope—over his real one, Hot Springs. Given the nakedly calculating nature of the Clintons' marriage, the better Fleetwood Mac theme would have been "You Can Go Your Own Way / Don't Go Away."

The people to whom Clinton pitched his campaign, if not his presidency, were Middle Americans very much like the audience country singer Dwight Yoakam wants: "cowboys in Odessa, Texas, the guy that works in some plant outside Tulsa, the guy working for Rockwell or Lockheed out in the San Fernando Valley, the guy who lives in Bakersfield." Yoakam calls them "the rightful heirs" to this country, a sentiment strikingly similar to Ross Perot's notion of the common folk as the "owners" of the country.

Yoakam is the unfallen Springsteen of country music. He is a self-conscious mythographer, a middle-class boy from Columbus, Ohio, who idealizes his grandfather Luther Tibbs (a name better than any fabrication), a miners' union organizer in Kentucky. Dwight moved to Los Angeles with a guitar and a border-state twang; he wrote lean fiddle and steel-guitar songs with a hard edge, sort of like Hank Williams Sr. if Hank had grown up listening to the Rolling Stones. He played in Southern California's punk clubs. He represented the purist end of the then-burgeoning "cowpunk" movement, a tremendously fruitful spasm in which several fine bands (Green on Red, Blood on the Saddle, Lone Justice, Jason and the Scorchers, Long Ryders) recast contemporary American life in the language of the frontier legends and Western movies that were dying before we were even born. They knew, as the Long Ryders sang, that "you just can't ride the boxcars anymore," but they saw hoboes and prospectors and white Indians on the streets of Santa Monica and in every Thunderbird-reeking wino slumped outside a Davy Jones's Locker. Yoakam shared the punks' defiance, their energized blend of rambunctious bohemianism and reactionary longing for some lost American golden age. He loathed Nashville and its spangled pimps and courtesans: I saw him at a little punk club in about 1986, and he spoke darkly of killing Kenny Rogers.

You can guess the rest. His independent recordings attracted the attention of Warner Brothers, and they took on the maverick. Maybe they broke him, maybe not. He has cut a number of very good songs, including the deracine anthem "I Sang Dixie," about an old Southerner dying on a Los Angeles barstool. His latest release, *This Time* (1993), finds Yoakam, like Springsteen, in retreat, usually to the sodden haven of the nearest barroom. He has been cited for "misogyny and prejudice" by Pareles of the *New York Times*. He calls himself a libertarian, and he denounces motorcycle helmet laws. He's made his peace with the country music establishment: he appears regularly on *Nashville Now*, where he is about as incendiary as Minnie Pearl. He dated Sharon Stone for a while, but who can blame him?

Yoakam blazed the path for the "new traditionalists," a hokey moniker for the austere counterrevolutionaries who ripped the rhinestones off the Nashville establishment in the 1980's. That Nashville has spent the 90's carefully reembroidering them is not Dwight's fault.

Even more obstreperous is Steve Earle, a Texas hellion and unvarnished spokesman of working-class whites whose best and harshest songs about the yearnings and discouragements of hick Americans are the apparent, sometimes even worthy, heirs to a rural realist tradition that can be traced straight back to E.W. (*The Story of a Country Town*) Howe and Joseph (*Zury, The Meanest Man in Spring County*) Kirkland and Hamlin (*Main-Travelled Roads*) Garland. When he is good he is very good indeed:

> There ain't a lot that you can do in this town
> You drive down to the lake and then you turn back around
> You go to school and you learn to read and write
> So you can walk into the county bank and sign away your life.
>
> I work at the fillin' station on the interstate
> Pumpin' gasoline and countin' out-of-state plates
> They ask me how far into Memphis, son, and where's the nearest beer
> They don't even know that there's a town around here.

Where Springsteen romanticized working-class life in a way that appealed to the smart, upwardly mobile, but sentimental sons of bus drivers and janitors, Earle, in his unromantic—dare we say resentful—way, speaks directly for those who are not going to rise above (abandon) it by going off to college and marrying a girl who reads books and listening to songs extolling the Common Man on a state-of-the-art CD player. Again, I quote extensively from Earle:

> I got a job but it ain't nearly enough
> A twenty thousand dollar pickup truck
> Belongs to me and the bank and some funny talkin' man from Iran
> I left the service got a G.I. loan
> I got married bought myself a home
> Now I hang around this one horse town and do the best that I can
> . . . . . .
> Been goin' nowhere down a one-way track
> I'd kill to leave but there ain't no turnin' back
> Got the wife and the kids and what would everybody say
> My brother's standin' on a welfare line
> And any minute now I might get mine
> Meanwhile there's the IRS and the devil to pay

He concludes, "I was born in the land of plenty now there ain't enough," and whether that's true or just whining amidst abundance (almost every person I know who's on relief has cable TV), it speaks to that disabling fear, the anticipation of catastrophe, that's made us a nation of cowards on couches, taking no chances. "I prefer adventure to security," Charles Lindbergh said, and we are so much his opposites that we ad-

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mire Dwight Yoakam merely for having the guts to ask Sharon Stone out.

Earle is a working-class Americanist, and thus an outlaw. (He did a killer live version of Springsteen's "State Trooper" that ranks among the highlights of my leaning-against-the-wall-holding-a-beer-and-dripping-ennui nightclub days.) He calls himself "somewhat to the right of Attila the Hun," and he hated Reagan for firing his brother, an air traffic controller. Then again, the outlaw changed a word in his signature song, "Guitar Town," for reasons that cannot have been good. "Everybody told me you can't get far, with 37 dollars and a Jap guitar." In the radio version "Jap" became "cheap." Welcome to the New World Order, Steve.

The new traditionalism petered out, and as country has become the official music of white America it has again exsanguinated itself. Yoakam still has a Top 10 hit now and then, and Steve Earle kicks around the club circuit, but Boss Cash Register crowns Garth Brooks, the pudgy geek from suburban Oklahoma who admits to cutting his eyeteeth on Journey, Dan Fogelberg, James Taylor, Billy Joel, and Kiss—the worst schlock of the 1970's. He's more Bobby Brady than Okie from Muskogee. His Oklahoma is not Merle Haggard's or Woody Guthrie's, and that's okay, but Brooks's Soonerism melts into Michael Jackson's "We Are the World" universalism so that it's indistinguishable from Jackson's Gary, Indiana. "We shall be free," Garth croons in his Godawful anthem of political correctness, but it is the "free . . . free-fallin'" that Florida panhandler Tom Petty understands to be the fate of all those poor lost Southern California kids growin' up in an affluence more heartbreakingly impoverished than 50 Pensacola trailer parks.

"Maybe it ain't exactly heaven but it's certainly part of my dreams," the Long Ryders sang of Alabama. There have been plenty of good cocky regional bands appealing to local pride: Lynyrd Skynyrd praise "Sweet Home Alabama—where the guvnah's true," and yes, that's George Wallace these long-haired dope-smokers were feting; Missouri's the Rainmakers, whose chief influences were Hank Williams and Stephen Foster, imagine rafting down the Mississippi with favorite sons Mark Twain, Chuck Berry, and Harry Truman; Steve Forbert dreams of going home to Laurel, Mississippi, where at least "I know exactly what I'm going to find."

But for every kid out there pumping his fist at invocations of his own sweet home there are 20 longing to "put 'er on that interstate and never look back," as Steve Earle sings. The familiar is boring and narrow and uninspiring, while under the palm trees skins tan from the sun that never sets. As the coquettish L.A. punkette Belinda Carlisle of the Go-Go's sneered at a nation of pimply-faced girls in Parma tract-houses:

> This town is our town
> It is so glamorous
> Bet you'd live here if you could
> And be one of us

This is what Angelenos really believe, and it's probably true.

The record conglomerates tolerate parochialism, as long as it can be used as a marketing strategy. Mellencamp—a perpetually ticked-off white-trash autodidact—was advertised as a Morning in America songster, which is why Reagan's trolls tried to buy him off. Springsteen, an admirer of Sergio Leone's spaghetti Westerns who wanted to paint his own America on a broad canvas with the inspired laboriousness of John Dos Passos, was hyped as a feel-good bombaster of "USA! USA!" stadium rock. They sold a lot of records, but now they are aging and bitter and reclusive. They were Americanists of the old sort, patriots of solidity and flesh and dirt, marketed as and by patriots of the new sort—of abstraction and America as an idea, not a real place.

Across the sea we also find dissenters from the New World Order. Morrissey, the celibate Oscar Wilde of postpunk England, has lately been crucified for his haunting "We'll Let You Know":

> We may seem cold
> Or we may even be
> The most depressed people you've ever known
> At heart, what's left, we sadly know
> That we are the last truly British people you'll ever know
> We are the last truly British people you will ever know.

With the pony-tailed execs and MTV directors and Gap posers as the face rock and roll presents to our trading partners in the New World Order, is it any wonder that Russian nationalists hate our guts and want to immunize the mother country against our poison? But Americanists understand that the images on a television screen are not America. John Fogerty, leader of the great (if precipitation-obsessed) Creedence Clearwater Revival, explained how he remained a patriot even through Vietnam: "First thing I thought was the Grand Canyon and my friends and neighbors—and the people all across the country. The people in power aren't my country any more than a bunch of gangsters are my country." LBJ and Nixon and Ford and Carter and Reagan and Bush and Clinton won't stop the rain. Ten thousand Fogertys might.

But I am getting too old to ken it anyway. Bob Seger may sing "come back baby, rock and roll never forgets" to all those "sweet sixteens turned 31," but the pride of townie Ann Arbor is a relic whose fine unpretentious strummings are heard in more elevators than nightclubs these days.

For a high-school graduation present last year I took a young friend to a concert by the punk band Social Distortion. (Okay, so I'm not the world's best role model.) The band consists of aging punks whose faces and smells are redolent of 47-year-old men in undershirts living on seventh floors of fetid high-rises on decaying Baltimore blocks. I wanted to hear ancient chestnuts like "Mommy's Little Monster," which, when they got around to it, singer Mike Ness introduced with a grudging "here's one for the old school." It was like a rock band at a wedding reluctantly playing "Moon River" so the wrinkled coots can dance their one dance. I got a beer and counted the rings in my trunk.

Rock and roll belongs to the young. Americanists—ghetto blacks, turnip-truck whites—will keep sprouting, and the record conglomerates will keep swallowing and spitting them out. "So you wanna be a rock-and-roll star?" the Byrds asked. Fine: "sell your soul to the company" and in return "the girls will tear you apart." But not everyone signs on the dotted line. We can only hope that the coming generations are, as Emerson hailed his successors, "stiff, heady, and rebellious." With the Springsteens locked in the storm cellar, hatches battened, youth must be served. Kick it over, kids. You have nothing to gain but your American birthright. C

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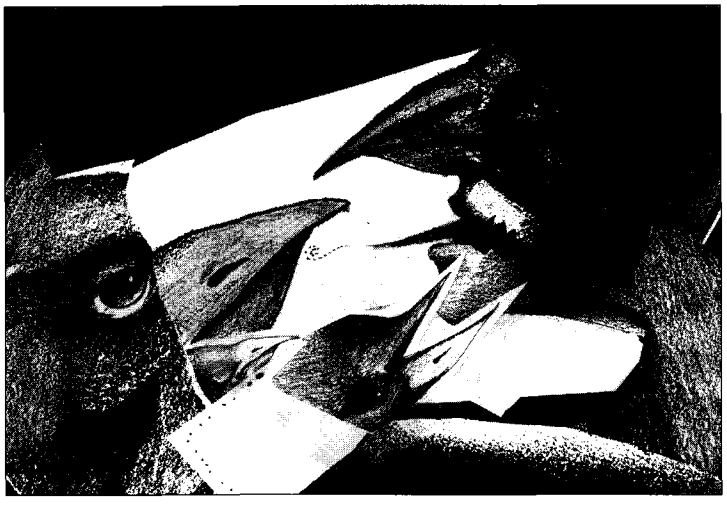
Degrade and Fall

by Christine Haynes

Among a people generally corrupt, liberty cannot long exist.
—Edmund Burke



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Sade: A Biography
by Maurice Lever
Translated by Arthur Goldhammer
New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux;
626 pp., $35.00

◆

I was reading Arthur Goldhammer's translation of Maurice Lever's *Sade* as the Senator Packwood scandal raged on, and although I wouldn't want to draw any unwarranted comparisons between the two *bonhommes*, the parallels between *Ancien Régime* France and contemporary America are unmistakable. Debauchery reigns in the corridors of power in the United States today as freely as it did in 18th-century France, and it is the smell of corruption, more than any detail about the marquis de Sade's ignominious life, that remains with the reader of Lever's forthright and spirited biography. (Goldhammer's translation, while it leaves out some useful notes and appendices regarding family histories and genealogies, is lively and readable.)

Sade reads like a novel. Lever employs a "synoptic" rather than "linear" method, which allows for a three-dimensional picture of the man, and he mixes serious analysis with sarcastic and ironic comments that at times make his tale almost farcical. Take, for instance, this description of Sade's introduction to his uncle's library, which included licentious works like the abbé Jacques Boileau's *History of the Flagellants, in which the good and bad uses of flagellation among the Christians are pointed out*:

> Boileau dwelt at length on the ways in which flagellation could excite the senses and discoursed learnedly on the grave question of whether it was better to discipline oneself on the back or on the buttocks. He also mentions numerous cases in which the whip stimulated *furia amorosa*. Pleasure through suffering: there was a precept [Sade] would not soon forget.

Or this account of Sade's efforts to evade the police:

> To avoid being recognized, he had donned the cassock of . . . a priest. In this same disguise he traveled down the Rhône as far as Marseilles. The journey went well except for one minor incident, which must have delighted [Sade]. While crossing the Durance, the ferry's rope broke and the craft drifted in the current for some time. Thinking that their final hour had arrived, the passengers threw themselves at the feet of the "curé" to make their last confession.

Donatien Alphonse François de Sade (1740-1814) descended from a long line of Provençal nobles supposed to have originated with the magus Balthasar. Donatien's father, Jean-Baptiste Joseph François, comte de Sade, was an illustrious libertine who left Provence to make a name for himself at the court of Louis XV but eventually returned home, ostracized and broke. Although he was born in Paris, the marquis was sent to Provence at an early age to live with his uncle, the abbé de Sade—"the very type of libertine priest." Returning to Paris to attend the prestigious Collège Louis-le-Grand (where, Lever speculates, he may have encountered flagellation and sodomy), the marquis began a successful, albeit short, military career at the age of 14.

Upon his discharge at the end of the

Christine Haynes is the assistant editor of Chronicles.

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Seven Years War in 1763, Sade embarked upon the dissolute life that would ultimately land him in prison. As information now revealed by Sade's descendants for the first time discloses, Sade's father long struggled first to arrange a marriage for his son and then to get him to the altar without venereal disease. And the marquis's marriage to Renée-Pélagie de Montreuil, daughter of a *noble de robe*, was no obstacle to his chain of affairs and debauches with actresses, courtesans, and common prostitutes. Less than six months after his wedding, Sade was arrested on charges of blasphemy and incitement to sacrilege for forcing a prostitute to trample on a crucifix, although he was let off within a few weeks.

But a certain Inspector Marais now had Sade under his surveillance, and for the rest of his life he would be in and out of trouble with the authorities, whether royal, revolutionary, or imperial. In the legendary Arcueil affair (1768), for instance, the marquis was imprisoned for taking a beggar woman to a house in the Paris suburb that he rented for just such occasions, whipping her until she bled, making small incisions with a pen knife on her back, and dripping hot wax on her wounds. Again, he was set free, on the condition that he retire to Provence, but his next escapade got him in hotter water. In June 1772 in Marseilles, he engaged in a "Cytherean morning" with four prostitutes and his valet, followed by a night with another prostitute. The gallant and generous marquis offered the women candies containing Spanish fly, an aphrodisiac. When two of them subsequently became violently ill, Sade was brought up on charges of poisoning, as well as sodomy (with his valet). Sade and the valet fled before being sentenced to death *in absentia* and executed in effigy.

Thus began a five-year period spent mainly on the run, although Sade also managed to get himself imprisoned in "the citadel" of Miolans (Savoy) and to escape, as well as to indulge in his great Silling fantasy with approximately 20 young servants at his fortress in Provence. Finally, Inspector Marais caught up with him when the marquis foolishly visited Paris (from which he was barred), and Sade spent the next 13 years writing a "wrenching monologue"—in correspondence and in fiction—from prison.

The marquis would have been liberated from the Bastille on July 14, 1789, except that 12 days earlier he had misbehaved (using the funnel normally employed to empty his chamber pot into the moat as a megaphone to start a disturbance) and been moved to Charenton, a home for the mentally ill that also housed "police prisoners." So it was not until the *lettre de cachet* (a secret letter arbitrarily used to keep "dangerous" or "scandalous" people under lock and key) was abolished in 1790 that Sade was set free—though not for long. The French Revolution was in full swing, and while the aristocratic marquis dropped the partitive from his name, called himself Louis Sade, and played the patriotic citizen (even writing pamphlets and speeches for the revolutionary cause), he was eventually arrested under the 1793 "law of suspects." In fact, Sade barely escaped execution just two days before Robespierre was guillotined. Released during the Thermidorean reaction, Sade returned to writing the novels and plays he had begun to produce during his long stint in prison, until he was arrested during a meeting with his publisher in 1801 and deposited in a series of prisons before being sent once again to Charenton. The grounds for his detention (although Sade was never tried) were sexual obsession, and the books seized at the time of his arrest were burned. It was in Charenton that Sade died in 1814.

While the details with which Lever fills in this sketch of Sade's life reveal much about the man, almost equally interesting is what the book reveals about his era. In 18th-century France, Lever writes, "vice was an unwritten privilege of the nobility." The degradation in morals coincided with the materialism, sensationalism, and individualism espoused by Enlightenment intellectuals and even relied on these philosophies for vindication. Locke, for example, became popular in French salons, where (argues Lionel Gossmann in his *French Society and Culture: Background for 18th Century Literature*) "both [his] sensationalism and his individualism could be welcomed by an aristocracy dedicated to the social pleasures and newly emancipated, as far as its private life was concerned, from the 'tyranny' of Versailles." The materialists struck an additional blow to Christian morality by arguing that the moral and social order is grounded not in divine law but in nature. While Sade's writings place him in this camp, they also show that he considered society to be *without* order; nature for him is not harmonious but Hobbesian. Materialism often slipped into pessimism in describing human relations, and Sade epitomizes the Age of Reason's quick descent from cheerful skepticism to gloom and despair.

Choderlos de Laclos's *Liaisons Dangereuses*, which is often included with Sade's *Justine* and *Cent Vingt Journées de Sodome* in discussions of 18th-century licentious literature, exemplifies the cynical view many intellectuals of the period took of human nature. Laclos associates love and sex with hostility and destruction, and his character Mme. Mertreuil's line "*Il vaut vaincre ou perir*" ("One must win or perish") proves true for the characters of this story. Milos Forman's film *Valmont* (loosely based on Laclos's novel) delivers an equally cynical message with the vicomte de Valmont's reproof of the marquise de Mertreuil: "You are confusing bets and marriages, Madame. One must always honor a bet." (*Valmont* vividly portrays the decadence of *Ancien Régime* France, and it seems no accident that both it and Stephen Frears' *Liaisons Dangereuses* were produced in 1980's America.)

A deist rather than a materialist, Voltaire still admitted with Laclos that human nature can be cruel. In *Candide* (which Sade's *Justine* parallels in inflicting misadventure upon misadventure on its main character), Voltaire maintains that man engages by nature in sin and corruption: when Candide and his philosopher companion Martin see two ships fighting, Martin says "that is how men treat each other"; a few pages later, Martin assures Candide that men have always been "liars, cheats, faithbreakers, ingrates, brigands, weaklings, rovers, cowards, enviers, gluttons, drunkards, misers, self-seekers, carnivores, calumniators, debauchers, fanatics, hypocrites, and fools"; and a scholar at a dinner party the two travelers attend philosophizes that life is "an eternal war."

But if other 18th-century writers questioned the harmony of nature, Sade deepened and generalized their doubts, as Gossmann concludes. Sade's work centered (as did his life) on what he came to call "isolism," or the radical impossibility of communication between human beings. In *Les Infortunes de la Vertu*, the 1787 precursor to *Justine*, Sade writes: "Man is naturally wicked, he is therefore wicked in the frenzy of his passions almost as much as in their calm,

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and in all cases the misfortunes of his fellow man may become abominable delights for him." Nature, according to him, "acts only through wickedness, . . . everything is vice and corruption, . . . everything is crime and disorder in her will and in her works."

Whereas Voltaire's and Laclos's stories ultimately generate a moral message, Sade's works yield only cynicism, fright, and despair. *Liaisons Dangereuses* may be immoral, but it is also a *morality* tale because its characters inspire pity and thus demonstrate the futility of living solely by the pleasure principle. *Candide* likewise ends with the advice that the only way to keep away the three great evils of boredom, vice, and need is to "work without reasoning." But because Sade's own emptiness means he can create only hollow, unbelievable, mechanistic figures, his accounts of their absurd adventures inspire only aversion (or worse, boredom) and not pathos.

This point calls into question Sade's status as a major literary figure. Sade may have said things no one had been willing to say before, but in reality his psychologically empty characters and his ridiculous plots neither shock nor impress. As even Lever admits, "The *impossibilia* [of *Justine*], pushed to the point of absurdity—or irony—suffice to render the work unsuitable for titillation." But this citation comes from a passage in which Lever is essentially praising Sade for subverting language, and the biography is littered with phrases that lead us to mistrust its author's literary judgment. Lever refers several times, for instance, to the "splendor" and "grandeur" of the Sadeian liturgy, and he also writes of Sade's "poetic genius," "fresh lucidity," and "lofty conception of vice." He even ranges Sade "alongside the best authors of the period." But the *coup de grace* has to be his comment that *Justine* "remains one of the most powerful and most striking creations of French literature": morality completely aside, one wonders at this point whether Lever has read Baudelaire or Proust, or even Sade's fellow Provençaux, Jean Giono and Frédéric Mistral. Sade's works leave us with nothing but his own misogynic notion of humanity: "My neighbor is nothing to me: there is not the slightest connection between him and me."

F. Gonzalez-Crussi, a pathologist at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, wrote in the *New York Times Book Review* six years ago that, two centuries after Sade, we continue to behave as if this tenet were true. "We have stood indifferent to genocide in Germany, while it occurred," he writes,

> and to mass extermination in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, to name only a few recent hecatombs. It is worthy of note that while the carnage was going on, we felt, in all candor, quite at ease. The record will show that the entire world looked on with utter indifference at horrifying deeds and that millions in Vancouver, Beijing or Australia lose no sleep over thousands upon thousands of killings in Central America.

For persisting in his descriptions of human cruelty among general indifference, Gonzalez-Crussi continues, Sade would be locked up even in these sexually liberated times.

But Dr. Gonzalez-Crussi, like Sade himself, misses the point. Yes, humans are naturally violent and mean, but in the face of this fact we must, as Voltaire reasons, keep working. Rather than agonizing over war in Bosnia and corruption in Haiti, we must attend to the people and the problems in our own backyard. In other words, "*Il faut cultiver notre jardin.*" It is because Sade did not do this—because he left his elderly father to die in poverty while he squandered what remained of the family fortune, because he brutalized (in word and deed) and betrayed his wife right under her nonetheless devoted nose, because he deserted his children and refused to contribute to their care—and *not* so much because he depicted crimes between strangers, that he deserves our horror and contempt.

There were others like him who deserve the same. Lever demonstrates in his brief references to other aristocrats and even religious men that Sade was not unique in his debauchery. As example, the "sadistic" comte de Charolais "killed his fellow human beings for sport, as other men went hunting. . . . His favorite amusement was to fire a musket at workmen repairing nearby roofs. When he hit one, he jumped for joy." And the abbé de Sade, in addition to living with two women "of whom he made free use," was once "caught in the act at a select house of prostitution" during a visit to Paris. The crimes the marquis committed were not unusual in his day.

What is more, these crimes contributed to the breakdown of a long-standing social order. If one is looking for a Voltairian lesson in this biography, it may be here. As a critic of the sequel to *Justine* put it: "I place licentious works such as the one I am denouncing to the authorities in the same class as attacks on the government, because if courage founds republics, good morals preserve them. Their ruin almost always leads to the fall of empires." If Sade's works seem more ridiculous than licentious today, our jaded sensitivities are an even bigger sign that our own empire (Senator Packwood and all) is on its way down. c

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Aerogram

by Michael McFee

Love note we pass
behind the teacher's back, the sour Miss Weltmeer
who would undo our careful folds, our S.W.A.K.,
and declaim it to the laughing class.

Pane of strange sky
untroubled by domestic clouds, bright with names
and places and offhand phrases I can't discover
no matter how many books I try.

Blue mirror: blue
at first with homesickness, blue now with regret
at having to return, at the unfolded bedsheet
and blood of history kissing you.

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Getting Solzhenitsyn Right

by Wayne Allensworth

Solzhenitsyn and the Modern World
by Edward E. Ericson, Jr.
Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway; 433 pp., $24.00

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Years after his arrest by the Soviet authorities, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, while recuperating in a prison hospital after a cancerous tumor had been cut from his body, cast out the last remnant of a spiritual tumor from his soul. A prison doctor, soon to die by the hand of another *zek*, "fervently" recounted to Solzhenitsyn his conversion to Christianity. "I am convinced," he told the feverish cancer patient, "that there is no punishment that comes to us in this life on earth which is undeserved." "I shudder," wrote Solzhenitsyn in *The Gulag Archipelago*. "Formerly you never forgave anyone. You judged people without mercy. . . . You have come to realize your own weakness—and you can therefore understand the weakness of others. And be astonished at another's strength. And wish to possess it yourself. . . . We are ascending."

"Solzhenitsyn is a Christian writer," wrote theologian Alexander Schmemann in 1970, before the great artist had publicly proclaimed his faith. The Christian theme of creation, fall, and redemption is indeed at the core of Solzhenitsyn's art and is invisible only to those who suffer from spiritual myopia, a condition as prevalent in the liberal democracies of the West as it was in the Soviet Union and which distorts all that is seen through the secular lense of politics. Edward Ericson, in *Solzhenitsyn and the Modern World* identifies the "motive force" behind Solzhenitsyn's act as Christianity; it is the writer's religion, not his politics, that Ericson calls the "bedrock" of his "moral universe." In Solzhenitsyn's world—the world of *homo religiosus*—the central conflict of modernity is not between communism and capitalism, nor between Stalinism and socialism or welfare-statism, but "between rejection of God and acceptance of God." "This concept is more difficult for the secular modern West to comprehend than is the atheism of the Bolsheviks," writes Ericson, which explains the strange parallel dualism of reactions to Solzhenitsyn's art in the Soviet Union and in the West in the early 1960's. When Solzhenitsyn's work was viewed as anti-Stalinist or anti-totalitarian, rather than as anti-communist, anti-socialist or—worst of all—anti-modern, he was praised by the Khrushchev regime and by Western critics. But the Soviet machine turned against him as his world view became clearer. He was denounced as an anti-Soviet traitor, a Jew (the KGB would spread the rumor that his real name was Solzhenitzer), a tool of the West; ironically, after a period in which Western writers and critics defended him as anti-totalitarian, he was denounced by his former defenders as "anti-Western," "authoritarian," and even "anti-Semitic." The arrogant having cleared the way for the ignorant, such charges are still commonplace, and so it is largely to the ignorant of the West—meaning the West as a political, economic, and geographic, but not a spiritual or cultural, entity—that Dr. Ericson addresses his much-needed exposition.

Ericson masterfully counters the preposterous charges leveled at Solzhenitsyn by carefully and gently explaining to his semi-educated audience that the biblical and classical sources that help to shape the writer's "moral universe" are apparent in his work. Solzhenitsyn is a patriotic Russian writer who works in the tradition of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy (which is to say the "broad Western literary tradition") and an admirer of Switzerland's decentralized political system, of the New England town meetings, and of the American Founders who hopes for the development in Russia of an organic civil society. Like Edmund Burke, he has no faith in the ability of social engineers to build society from above, and he sees such efforts as attempts to replace God as the architect of the universe, as manifestations of Adam's sin. For Solzhenitsyn Russia is attached to the West by Christianity, and his admiration for the Christian West, as well as his criticism of post-Christian liberal democracy, makes him the most pro-Western of Russophiles.

Ericson's apologia is a scholar's extension of Solzhenitsyn's artistic message, a reflection of the artist's hope that the West can learn from Russia's suffering by recognizing the source of its own moral decay and seeking redemption. Solzhenitsyn's honest criticism of the contemporary West is at a people who should know better, at countries who suffer from cultural amnesia and spiritual emptiness, a condition that manifests itself in the flabby tyranny of the consumerist welfare state. Ericson's gentle prodding is a hopeful counterattack aimed at enlightening those to whom Solzhenitsyn is a mystery, a literary sphinx who speaks riddles in a now-forgotten language. The message is that the West is not synonymous with liberal mass democracy, that freedom is a condition (a condition, Solzhenitsyn would say, whose prerequisite is personal conversion), not a process. For the arrogant, of course, the most savage opponents of all that Solzhenitsyn believes, Ericson's book will not be news. They know very well that when Solzhenitsyn speaks of admiring the West he means Christendom. When they say that Solzhenitsyn is the enemy of the West, they understand perfectly which "West" they mean. They will have none of his glorifying Dead White Males, none of his archaic religious moralizing. It is the defenders of the contemporary West who are themselves anti-Western.

Wayne Allensworth is an information officer at the Foreign Broadcast Information Service in Washington, D.C. The views expressed are his alone.

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The Claims of Community

by J.O. Tate

Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community: Eight Essays
by Wendell Berry
New York: Pantheon Books;
179 pp., $20.00

◆

This slim book packs quite a punch. Its author requires that, in order to read him, we cast off the distorted language and prepackaged thought we absorb from the hum of the media. Indeed, he wants us to awaken from the slumber which that drone is designed to deepen.

You might say that Mr. Berry is interested in words. "Environment," for instance, he sees as an inadequate usage and as a denial of "Creation" and "world." By the time he gets started on "globalization," "free trade," and the "New World Order," he is both illuminating and funny. What Berry says about the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade I have seen nowhere else and is only another reminder that most American citizens don't know what their government does, or care. And when Wendell Berry mentions "the community," he does not refer to the cronies of the Reverend Al Sharpton, or to "the gay and lesbian community," or to any other such real or imagined self-selected assembly of the like-minded. No, he means "community"—you know, the people who live nearby and have an interest and a say; neighbors and cousins, those with whom you sense "an understood mutuality of interest" (excluding the police, the BATF, the IRS).

Mr. Berry's thoughts are bracing and wholesome. His discourse puts me in mind of George Orwell in its insistence on truth and integrity of expression and, in its adherence to simplicity and independence, of Henry David Thoreau. Berry's "Sales Resistance" rejects the cheery idiocy of commercialized niceness and mass merchandizing by virtue of which the human being becomes a robotic consumer as well as a productive automaton. But don't assume Berry purveys sermons—quite the contrary. He can and does express himself with Swiftian indignation, economy, and dark humor. The few simple "truths" we have to master to understand the new commercial education, for example, can be highly amusing when they are not terrifying:

> The main thing is, don't let education get in the way of being nice to children. Children are our Future. Spend plenty of money on them but don't stay home with them and get in their way. Don't give them work to do; they are smart and can think up things to do on their own. Don't teach them any of that awful, stultifying, repressive, old-fashioned morality. Provide plenty of TV, microwave dinners, day care, computers, computer games, cars. For all this, they will love and respect us and be glad to grow up and pay our debts.

In a similar vein, he lists some expensive political packages, such as:

> **Tolerance and Multiculturalism.** Quit talking bad about women, homosexuals, and preferred social minorities, and you can say anything you want about people who haven't been to college, manual workers, country people, peasants, religious people, unmodern people, old people, and so on. Tolerant and multicultural persons hyphenate their land of origin and their nationality. I, for example, am a Kentuckian-American.

Right. But Mr. Berry is no entertainer, though he can be very entertaining. He is a moralist and, in the best sense of the word, an economist. His observations on what we usually call politics are striking in that they elude the eroded categories of left and right. Berry's essay "Peaceableness Toward Enemies" is a unique and valuable comment on the Gulf War, which in its rebuke to gigantism, abstraction, and arrogance deserves a wide readership.

Wendell Berry's daring, in trying to imagine how a Christian nation should or might conduct foreign policy, is both morally bracing and politically challenging. His analysis of Christianity itself, however, though highly creditable, is in my view flawed by its scanting of Original Sin. If we have a Redeemer, then surely there must have been much to be redeemed from—and there still is. In Milton's more comprehensive vision, as with the Bible's, the Earth fell along with Adam and Eve—or was that Adam and Steve? However that may be, Berry's righteous love of the Creation may lead him to forget that the Kingdom of Heaven is, after all, not of this world, and that William Blake, who declared that everything that lives is holy, was not always the most reliable of prophets—or at least never anticipated the Clinton administration. A sterner sense of sin might show Mr. Berry just why he has so much to contend with from all those holy sweethearts, his fellow human beings.

Nevertheless, Berry's sense of our place as stewards is right and needful in many ways. Some of his points and specifically his citation of Ananda Coomaraswamy are highly reminiscent of the work of Andrew Lytle in particular and of the Vanderbilt Agrarians in general. Since Berry does acknowledge Thoreau, I wish that he had also mentioned the principles, at least, of those Southern precursors who (like Berry himself) refused to subordinate the vital needs of humans to the unending demands of business.

Berry's sense of legitimate community interests that supersede both private claims and public requirements leads him to insights that today are almost unheard of:

> The conventional public opposition of "liberal" and "conservative" is, here as elsewhere, perfectly useless. The "conservatives" promote the family as a sort of public icon, but they will not promote the economic integrity of the household or the community, which are the mainstays of family life. Under the sponsorship of "conservative" presidencies, the economy of the modern household, which once required the father to work away from home, now requires the mother to work away from home, as well. And this development has the wholehearted endorsement of "liberals," who see the mother thus forced to spend her days away from her home and children as "liberated"—though nobody has yet seen the fathers thus forced away as "liberated." Some feminists are

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thus in the curious position of opposing the mistreatment of women and yet advocating their participation in an economy in which everyone is mistreated.

For passages like that, and for other reasons as well, Wendell Berry has earned a special place as a sage. Better than any one of his contemporaries, he has identified what is wrong with the way we live and pointed to ways to make it right.

J.O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.

Gathering the Desert

by Gregory McNamee

The Wilderness of the Southwest
by Charles Sheldon
Edited by Neil Carmony and David Brown
Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press; 256 pp., $14.95

◆

It is ironic that the modern environmentalist movement was founded by men with whom most modern environmentalists would have nothing to do today: game hunters, many so avid for the chase that they would spend fortunes to collect antlers and skins and skulls from far-off places. Theodore Roosevelt, to name one distinguished early conservationist, was responsible for setting aside vast tracts of land for national parks and wildlife preserves; he also traveled to the Arctic Circle, to China's Taklimakan Desert, to the Serengeti Plain to add rare specimens to his collection of kills, which already numbered countless species from fields and streams that lay closer to home. Charles Sheldon (1867-1928) garnered a smaller reputation than that of the bully-pulpit President, but he filled the hunter-conservationist role just as well; his efforts substantially enriched the American public domain, and if few moderns have heard of his work, they have their remedy in *The Wilderness of the Southwest*.

A Yale graduate from a once well-to-do family gone broke in the recessions of the 1880's and 90's, Sheldon scrapped his plans for a grand tour of Europe, took to the woods with a shotgun and pointer, and set about exploring North America from Alaska to the high Sierra Madre of Mexico. He began his career, as literary archaeologists Neil Carmony and David Brown tell us in their edition of Sheldon's unpublished field notes, as the junior manager of a Midwestern railroad. By dint of Yankee virtues Sheldon rose quickly through the ranks, and other railroad tycoons began to take note of him. In 1898 Dean Sage, a New York entrepreneur, hired Sheldon to develop a railroad line through northern Mexico so that Middle American freight could be more efficiently shipped to the Pacific—Los Mochis, Sonora, lies 300 miles closer to San Louis than does San Francisco. The business eventually failed, but it has as its legacy the railroad line that snakes through Chihuahua's Barranca de Cobre, carrying thousands of tourists annually through what is known as Mexico's Grand Canyon.

Now jobless, Sheldon turned to Yalie friends for help. One eventually introduced him to C. Hart Merriam, the director of the U.S. Biological Survey, who hired him as an assessor in 1903 and sent him to central Alaska. He was not there long before he began to press for the creation of a national park to protect 20,322-foot Denali from mining claims. His campaign did little to endear him to Alaska's commercial interests, but it helped launch the present state's vast ecotourism industry, a primary source of revenue. After recruiting Roosevelt and the game-hunting Boone and Crockett Club to his side, Sheldon finally prevailed in 1919, but to his lasting disappointment, as Carmony and Brown note, North America's tallest peak and its associated park were named Mount McKinley.

Alaska did not hold Sheldon for long. Suddenly interested in the biota of the arid Southwest, Merriam dispatched him to Arizona where at the same time that he hunted pronghorn antelope (*Antilocapra americana*) and desert bighorn (*Oyis canadensis*) he became concerned with their continued health as a species. Carmony and Brown have chased down Sheldon's gracefully written notes describing one such hunting trip into the heart of the Grand Canyon, in which the self-taught naturalist offers still-useful observations on the ways of the indigenous Havasupai Indians and on the peerless beauty of their homeland, which had only just come under federal jurisdiction as a national park. Subsequent expeditions took Sheldon into the harsh Pinacate and Lechuguilla regions of western Arizona and Sonora, of which he wrote: "This desert is certainly among the most arid regions of America, but it teems with life. The sands in the washes show the tracks of the small animals." Working there, he continued, was a fine tonic: "I am getting in better condition daily."

When forest ranger Aldo Leopold killed a Mexican gray wolf atop Arizona's Mogollon Rim, he experienced the epiphany that would make him one of America's foremost champions of wilderness: wolves, he concluded, are necessary to a healthy landscape; every creature that does not harm a place belongs there. Charles Sheldon underwent no such transformation, and animal-rights activists may cringe at his account of a prize taken while he explored the remote, imposing Tuseral Mountains of Sonora. He shot and killed a particularly battered desert bighorn. "A veteran old ram, scabby with hair almost gone, front knees bare and calloused, one horn badly broken in the middle from butting, the skin on his face scarred from fighting. His ears were full of ticks and almost stopped up. He was in exceedingly ragged condition and had had hard fighting. It was a romantic spot to kill an old ram." Anyone recounting such an adventure today—or confessing an admiration for barbarians like Hemingway and Turgenev—would earn more wrath than admiration.

Sheldon came to know many such romantic spots, and his explorations of the desert put him in rare company. As with his Havasupai contacts, his dryland trav-

LIBERAL ARTS

TANNING RIGHTS

A former inmate of the Rush County (Indiana) Jail is suing the county for failing to provide him with tanning sessions, reported the *Chicago Tribune* last December. Tim Spurling seeks $300,000 from the county, because its commissioners refused to purchase an ultraviolet tanning lamp to treat his psoriasis.

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els taught him to value the lifeways of the Indian nations he encountered. His journals show him to be a thoughtful recorder of the things he saw from day to day, not only the small details of weather or the shape of a particular ridge but deeper matters pertaining to religious custom and daily life. His pleasant memories of the Seri Indians of Tiburon Island, in the Gulf of California, make for an appreciative desert vignette: "It was very picturesque to see the Indians sitting about the fire under a big ironwood tree. I slept close to them. Coyotes, as usual here and on the island, howl in apparent chorus."

Sheldon knew, as many later conservationists would come to recognize, that in order to preserve animal populations a great deal of open space is needed: unlogged forest highlands, wild rivers, and unbroken tracts of ground. In his later years in Arizona he called for more than four million acres of Western desert to be set aside as a preserve for the desert bighorn. He held his own against local ranchers, who objected to turning more land over to the public domain, and against territorial governor George W.P. Hunt, who thundered in rage over the prospect of having a chunk of his land turned into "damned billy goat pasture." Despite his urgings, Sheldon's idea was never set in motion; with the advent of World War II, most of the land in question was turned over to bombing and gunnery ranges, and today fighter planes and rockets still shoot over the heads of the dwindling bighorn population.

The Wilderness of the Southwest is essential reading for desert rats, especially for those who haunt wild places like the Pinacate—graduate schools to most of the Sonoran Desert's romper room—and the Cabeza Prieta, Edward Abbey's favorite refuge. Neil Carmony and David Brown have done well in making this book available, in bringing so much learned research to the job of setting Sheldon's work in context, and in simply drawing the man to our attention once again. Sheldon's field notes are instructive lessons in how to observe nature and humankind, and his life is an object lesson as well in illustrating that while nature always bats last, someone has to act as umpire.

Gregory McNamee is the author of the forthcoming book Gila: The Life and Death of an American River *(Crown Publishers).*

Brief Mentions

The Patton Mind: The Professional Development of an Extraordinary Leader. *By Roger H. Nye*
Wayne, NJ: Avery Publishing Group;
224 pp., $12.95

The perfect gift for the armchair warrior, *The Patton Mind* traces the intellectual development of a "profane man of action" who, Roger Nye notes, "left behind the most complete record of exhaustive professional study of any World War II general—or any general in American history, for that matter." Dyslexic as a child, Patton was the beneficiary of parents who continually read to him from the classics, ancient history, and Romantic poetry. He developed a prodigious memory, which undoubtedly helped nurture his sense of destiny, his belief in reincarnation, and hence his fearlessness. To perish bravely, like a legendary hero, was glorious, marking not the end of life, but an entry into Valhalla before one was reborn to take up the shield and sword once more. *The Patton Mind* is, in essence, a survey of the books that shaped and justified Patton's thinking. Patton disdained intellectuals, but he was a voracious reader of military history, biography, and tactics. The professional soldier had, in Patton's words, to "be so soaked in military lore that he does the military thing automatically." And though he said bluntly that soldiers were "killers," he was a good deal less bloodthirsty than some politicians. For all his aggressive fire, Patton was shot through with a famous religious sense and believed in victory with magnanimity, not retribution, and in targeting enemy soldiers for destruction rather than their cities and civilians.

—H.W. Crocker III

James B. Conant: Harvard to Hiroshima and the Making of the Nuclear Age. *By James Hershberg*
New York: Alfred A. Knopf;
948 pp., $35.00

The career of Harvard President James B. Conant (1933-1952), chemistry prodigy and godfather to the A-bomb, refutes H.L. Mencken's opinion that a university president of "real intelligence" was as "improbable as a Bach festival in Mississippi." Among the first of the modern university presidents who prefer to be knee-deep in much that has little to do with university life, the professor who began his presidency by carving out time to teach undergraduates soon found more important things to do, especially when it came to lecturing government officials on the evils of everything from communism to the H-bomb. Called to Washington in 1941 to help pave the road to Hiroshima, he never quite lost his attraction to the corridors of power.

An Eisenhower Republican before Eisenhower Republicanism existed, Conant was never quite at home in Harry Truman's Washington; a Cold War liberal, he was never at all comfortable in what he feared was becoming Joe McCarthy's America. But he was just as much a politician as the above three, and the bulk of James Hershberg's monumental biography details Conant's political life. Whether the issue was atomic policy or McCarthyism on campus, Conant invariably tried to find a way to claim the moral high ground *and* save his presidential hide *and* enhance his national reputation. Hershberg spends literally hundreds of pages exploring the twists and turns of Conant's mind as he wrestled with the consequences of the Manhattan Project before aligning himself with those who proposed to "ban the [H-] bombers." He accords somewhat less space to Conant's mealymouthed efforts to uphold academic freedom while appeasing his conservative board of overseers. One can only shudder at the prospect of the pusillanimously platitudinous President Conant bending before the politically correct McCarthyites of today.

—John C. Chalberg

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Letter From Utah

by William Norman Grigg

The New Race War

Last September, 17-year-old Utah resident Aaron Chapman found himself caught in traffic outside Salt Lake City's Triad Amphitheater following a rock concert. Chapman's red flannel shirt attracted the attention of eight to ten Tongan Crip gang members, who surrounded Chapman's car and began taunting him. Although Chapman ignored the harassment, the Crips began to punch him through the open car window. Chapman's niece, 17-year-old Monica Vigil, pulled him clear of the car. When a gang member approached Chapman with a metal pipe, she tried to shield her uncle with her body. The Crips hurled the girl aside, threw Chapman to the sidewalk, and continued the beating.

Vigil later recalled, "I was telling everybody to help, and they were looking at me as if I was stupid." Hundreds of spectators observed the atrocity with stolid indifference. Suddenly, 17-year-old Asi Mohi emerged from the crowd. Shouting "You want more, here's some more," Mohi drew a .22 pistol and shot Chapman point-blank. The boy died 45 minutes later.

Salt Lake police arrested Mohi the next morning at his Bountiful home. Mohi led the police to the murder scene and retrieved the pistol; he quickly confessed to the killing. Mohi was well-acquainted with police procedure, as his record at the time of the shooting included five felonies and 15 misdemeanors. A year before the shooting Mohi had completed a nine-month probation term for gang-related violence.

Chapman's murder made for predictably maudlin media coverage. In both print and television accounts of the incident, Utah's self-appointed molders of the public mind sermonized about the "tragedy" of gang violence. Utah Governor Mike Leavitt called the state legislature into special session for the purpose of devising "anti-gang" measures, including tighter gun controls. But the most arresting aspect of the incident was the utter refusal of Utah's elite to treat the beating/murder of a white teenager by a Tongan gang as a racial incident.

Granted, the Tongan Crips had initially been provoked by the color of Chapman's shirt, not the color of his skin. But it is useful to speculate how Utah's "tolerance" industry would have reacted had a Tongan or another "person of color" been beaten and murdered by a gang of eight to ten white youths.

As soon as the media had wrung the pathos out of Chapman's death, it began to lavish compassion upon the "other victim"—none other than the confessed killer, Asi Mohi. This effort began with a remark made by Salt Lake Police Lieutenant Dennis Tueller, who for some reason saw fit to minimize Chapman's murder: "Chalk it up to the heat of passion. Mohi saw his buddies in a fight and jumped out to help them." By what reckoning is a situation in which a gang is beating a single victim considered a "fight"? To how much "help" are eight to ten large Tongan men entitled in an effort to brutalize one helpless teenager?

Brian Preece, one of Mohi's coaches at Salt Lake's West High School, told the September 9 *Salt Lake Tribune*, "There are many victims in this tragedy. The potential of each one of these young men's lives will be permanently lost." Mohi had been a cocaptain of the West High football team. While Aaron Chapman's parents buried their son, Mohi's teammates wrote the confessed murderer's jersey number on their helmets as a protest and a gesture of solidarity with "the other victim."

"What went wrong?" sniffled the headline of a September 12 *Tribune* cover profile of Mohi. The paper portrayed Mohi as a troubled, misunderstood youth whose family had fled L.A. to liberate him from the tenacious grip of his gang loyalties. Mohi had been a dismal student and had fathered a bastard child. However, the *Tribune* insisted, Mohi had been "rehabilitated" and planned to start a new life before his sudden murderous atavism.

The story even took a stab at blaming Chapman for his own death: "The Chapmans insist Aaron was not in a gang, and there's no indication he was. Still, investigators did find a gun in his car after the shooting, and students in both West and Granite high schools [Chapman attended the latter] insist gang members attended his funeral." It is impossible to imagine a similar effort to tarnish the dead with innuendo had the murder victim been a member of an accredited minority group.

Salt Lake attorney Ron Yengich, one of the state's most visible "civil rights" lawyers, stepped forward to defend Mohi. Yengich quickly deployed the race card: "It troubles me that if four white kids get together and beat somebody up, we don't say that's gang-related. But if they're four Samoans or four Hispanics or four blacks, automatically we assume it's gang-related." This is patently absurd: if eight to ten white youths were to beat and kill a "person of color" in Utah (or anywhere else), the act would be taxonomized a "hate crime" and become a global news event. But Chapman's death at the hands of an ethnic gang was referred to the Salt Lake Area Gang Project, rather than the state human rights commission, and left completely unreported outside of Utah.

Of all the contending varieties of ethnic gangs, apparently only "skinheads" are capable of committing "hate crimes." Utahns have been kept in a low-grade panic about the skinhead "menace" since a small group of the tonsured cretins took up residence near Zion National Park in late 1992. Immediately after the skinheads materialized, minority "leaders," from the NAACP to the state sodomite lobby, began to whine for a more stringent "hate crimes" law.

On July 1, 1993, a small group of skinheads was intercepted outside of an apartment complex in the northern Utah community of Layton. Police seized several weapons from the skinheads and filed misdemeanor charges. The Utah NAACP and the FBI urged the Davis County prosecutor to file "hate crimes" charges against the skinheads, noting that the Utah statute does not require the commission of a violent act—all that is required is "intent to intimidate or terrorize" an individual or group on the basis of race, ethnicity, or religious affiliation.

The Utah NAACP has also detected racial motives in the attempted murder

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of Rodney James, a Los Angeles youth who was shot in the head by a white student while attending Utah Valley Community College in Orem. James, a handsome, popular musician, attracted a lot of attention from female students. This provoked the jealousy of Lyle Murray, James' roommate, who lured James away from campus and shot him. Fortunately, James survived with only minor injury.

Although James believes racial motives may have been involved in the shooting, he reports that Murray had never uttered a racial epithet. Aside from the fact that the assailant was white and the victim was black, there is no basis for regarding the incident as a "race-related" crime. Nevertheless, the NAACP and its allies have insisted that the shooting be regarded as racist in origin and prosecuted as a hate crime.

Under the standards employed in the Layton skinhead incident and the shooting of Rodney James, Aaron Chapman's murder should be regarded as a hate crime. Clearly, the actions of the Tongan Crips were intended to "terrorize" and "intimidate" people; furthermore, the assailants were all Tongan and the victim was white. But the beating/murder attracted little interest from Utah's "social justice" activists. Jeanette Williams, who chairs both the state NAACP and the "William Andrews Committee on Social Justice" (Andrews was a black man executed in 1992 for a multiple torture-murder), said that she was concerned only that Asi Mohi receive a sentence no more severe than a white criminal would receive for the same offense.

The Utah "Martin Luther King, Jr., Human Rights Commission" also treated the Chapman murder with indifference. Created by gubernatorial executive order in 1991, the King Commission is an adjunct to the state economic development board. The commission's purpose is to persuade politically correct corporations that Utah "values diversity." To that end, the commission sponsored Utah's hate crimes law and has inflicted various reeducation schemes upon public school students. An early priority of the commission was realized last summer when Salt Lake City's busiest street was renamed "Martin Luther King, Jr., Boulevard." The commission had no interest in the murder of Aaron Chapman, a genuine human rights abuse by any standard.

The media's soft-focus treatment of Asi Mohi helped minimize criticism of a social-engineering program in which the young recidivist had been enrolled. Called "Colors of Success," the program was designed to "lower social barriers" among high school and junior high school students in Salt Lake. Mohi had been the program's poster boy: a front-page story in the December 29, 1992, *Deseret News* displayed Mohi as the program's most notable success story.

According to the *Deseret News*, the "Colors of Success" program brings "at-risk" students together with "privileged" students under the guidance of adult "case managers." Participants become involved in discussions about "racism, problem-solving, goal-setting, peer pressure, and how to improve the school and community." According to "Colors" alumna Emma Wharton, "We [would] talk about problems in the school, this teacher being unfair, racism, or why there are more kids in upper-level classes." In addition to nurturing class and race resentment in students, the program's "case managers" would conduct "conflict-resolution" sessions involving rival gangs.

"Colors of Success," which is funded by tax-exempt foundations and government agencies, has been a hard sell, and much of its marketability depended upon Mohi. The *Deseret News* reported that Mohi "hopes a college athletic scholarship is in his future—and it won't be as a Prop. 48 athlete [an academic hardship case]." After two and a half years in the "Colors" program, Mohi had become, according to the *Tribune*, "a role model for troubled teens." During a spring 1993 "Take Back the Streets" event sponsored by Salt Lake gang caseworkers, Mohi was introduced as a "reformed gang member." Robert Sawyer, Mohi's case manager, said that Mohi had been active in "Colors" right up to the night he shot Chapman.

Duane Bourdeaux, the founder of "Colors," was in the crowd outside the Triad Amphitheater when Chapman was murdered. His first instinct, to judge from his published remarks, was to defend Mohi and the "Colors" program: "If he could have made it through this year, I really think things could have changed. Whether the kid did go out and take a life, I know what the kid did in this program. . . . I know what I see in this individual." Bourdeaux was obviously concerned that Mohi's actions would provoke criticism of the "Colors" program: "It's devastating for a program like ours to get this kind of press." But the program may prove impervious to the negative publicity. According to the *Tribune*, Mohi's crime has inspired "police, prosecutors, teachers and parents [to call] for more programs like 'Colors of Success.'"

While Utah's intellectual elite contemplated an enhanced entitlement for the state's youthful criminals, Monica Vigil became another crime victim. In late October Miss Vigil was killed in her sleep by an intruder who crept into her bedroom and shot her point-blank. As of this writing no suspect has been detained. Police briefly questioned Vigil's former boyfriend, against whom Vigil had obtained a restraining order; however, the young man provided an alibi. Just prior to her death Vigil had testified against Asi Mohi, and many in Utah reasonably suspect that her murder was an act of retribution by Mohi's gang allies.

Aaron Chapman's death was worthy of broader publicity—and it would have gotten it if the victim had belonged to a politically correct ethnic group. On the day of Chapman's murder, the Associated Press nationwide carried a story about the flight of black people from the tiny town of Vidor, Texas, because of racial tensions—an ugly situation, to be sure, but no more inherently newsworthy than the Chapman story. The Florida trial of two white men accused of burning Jamaican tourist Christopher Wilson, which was concluded just shortly after Chapman's death, also earned worldwide attention. Wilson had been abducted and burned on New Year's Day 1993, surviving with burns on 40 percent of his body. The two white defendants were convicted of kidnapping, robbery, and attempted murder despite abundant weaknesses in the prosecution's case. Wilson suffered horribly and his assailants should be punished to the limits of the law. However, Wilson—unlike Aaron Chapman—is alive.

The opinion cartel's curious disinterest toward the Chapman murder redundantly illustrates this fact: under the victim hierarchy recognized by America's social engineers, white Americans can be the perpetrators—but never the victims—of racially motivated crimes.

William Norman Grigg is a staff writer for the New American.

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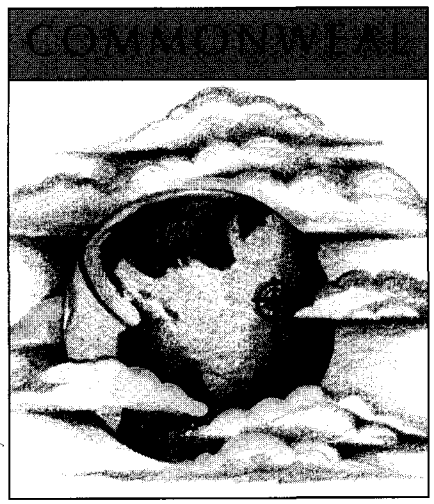

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Anatomy of an Inaugural Poem

by John Meroney, Jr.

Diversity and the Maya Angelou Story

Evidence that Maya Angelou may have borrowed from another poem for the one she delivered at Bill Clinton's inauguration was reported in this magazine last December. The White House, having seen the December *Chronicles* and the subsequent news stories about it, appears to have opted to distance itself from Angelou rather than to defend her. Apparently, the White House is cognizant of the fact that at this point in the Clintons' presidency, it cannot risk yet another instance of things not being what they seem.

In 1985, Norton F. Tennille, Jr., a Washington, D.C., lawyer for the prestigious Jones, Day, Reavis & Pogue law firm, wrote a poem, "Outward Bound," following a wilderness adventure with the North Carolina Outward Bound School, an educational organization that promotes self-reliance. It was widely distributed throughout North Carolina among individuals connected with the Outward Bound program. Tennille's poem begins "Rock, rope, river, hands" and uses those images, and that of the tree, as its structure. When Tennille heard Angelou deliver "On the Pulse of Morning," which opens with "A Rock, A River, A Tree," he immediately recognized the resemblance.

Tennille wrote to Angelou, who, during the days between her selection by Clinton and her reading at the swearing-in ceremony, had met with individuals connected with Outward Bound and "shared her struggle" by recounting the difficulties she was having composing the poem. Tennille sent Angelou copies of both poems on which he diagramed the parallel structure and noted the identical imagery and themes. Tennille asked her, "Did you ever read my poem, and did you draw on its concept, structure, [and] images in constructing your own?"

Tennille made additional inquiries to Angelou's publisher, Random House, and her employer, Wake Forest University. A year later, Tennille has yet to receive any response from Angelou, her publisher, or Thomas K. Hearn, Jr., president of Wake Forest. Angelou, whose real name is Marguerite Johnson, has also failed to respond to my numerous, repeated questions about this matter, as well as to questions from other media representatives.

Random House published *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now* last fall and sent Angelou on a frenzied publicity tour to promote her small collection of short essays. She lurched at interviewers who asked about the creation of the poem. Her bizarre reaction was never more blatant than on Charlie Rose's PBS talk-show. Rose merely uttered the words "A Rock, A River, A Tree," and before he could even articulate his question, Angelou lunged back, "Shall I tell you about the rock?" She attributed the images of the poem to the "African-American soul."

Particularly important to her was that the poem has been "translated into 40 languages or so." Said Angelou: "I may get three translations of my poem in Bengali and of course the alphabet is not recognizable to me. The only way I know it's my poem is there's a tree, a drawing of a rock, and a stream with some frisky fish in it," and she moved her hands to simulate a fish swimming.

Letters Tennille exchanged with Angelou's publicist and stockbroker were unavailable to me when I wrote my December report. These documents provide new insight. Both men told Tennille, "I hope you will let this matter rest." Perhaps they were afraid of what could become of the evidence that appears to be against her.

"I fail to understand why an intelligent attorney would spend so much time searching for similarities which do not exist," wrote Robert J. Brown, president of B&C Associates, Inc., a High Point, North Carolina, outfit that schedules Angelou's press interviews. "I was fortunate to have witnessed the creation of Dr. Angelou's inaugural poem," said Brown. "While I sat nearby, she wrote and then recited the lines she composed. It was fascinating to watch her work."

If Brown's story is accurate, it conflicts with Angelou's vivid account of the method she used to write the poem, a ritual she claims to have used throughout her entire literary career. She secludes herself in a local motel room, where she instructs the manager to remove any paintings or decorative material that may distract her solitude, and with a Bible, thesaurus, yellow legal pad, and bottle of sherry she begins to write. Being in a motel room with her press agent as she writes her literature, asking him every few minutes if he approves of the work in progress, is a marked departure from her normal routine.

Letters from Campbell Cawood, Angelou's stockbroker at Alex, Brown & Sons, Inc., in Winston-Salem, were even more curious. "She and I have been personal friends since her arrival in Winston-Salem," said Cawood. "I too was in close contact with her while [the inaugural poem] was being composed," he wrote. When I later questioned Cawood about this assertion, he denied it, saying, "I wasn't there," and then, in the same interview, "I don't know if I was there because I was there several times when she was in a composing mode—she thinks fluidly, constantly." Cawood refused to concede in his letter that Angelou had borrowed from Tennille's poem, saying only that Angelou had lifted "biblical verses," "beloved spiritual hymns," "our Constitution," and "many

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other references" and used them as her own.

During my interview with Cawood, he said, "If Tennille wants to take her on, I promise him, he won't know what hit him." I asked him to explain. "She's a very articulate—she will respond very accurately and deliberately to him. If you've heard her speak, you know her command of the English language and her command of logic. She speaks seven languages—lectures in seven languages. She has no formal education. She has memorized Shakespeare—she can recite every line of Shakespeare."

Cawood went on to praise Angelou and to say that she had "created a masterpiece of great dimension." He called the idea that Angelou could have been inspired by Tennille's poem "mental masturbation" and "a frivolous exercise." But when pressed, Cawood admitted that he didn't even know whether Angelou had seen Tennille's poem prior to the inauguration. As Cawood concluded his missive to Tennille: "I pray your tenancy [sic] and correspondence in attempting to contact her [Angelou] was in a grateful spirit and not as I and others have interpreted it."

Tennille wrote back to Cawood and listed seven examples of the similarities. "The theme of each poem is to look to these aspects of nature and draw strength from them, literally and/or metaphorically," said Tennille. "Another theme is return to the natural elements as a stimulus to self-discovery," Tennille explained. Both poems, he said, personified the rock and river. Tennille also said his poem personifies ropes hanging from trees; Angelou's personifies the tree. Tennille's other personification is "hands"; Angelou's poem says, "Women, children, men, / Take it [the dream] into the palm of your hands." Both end with affirmation. "At the end of each there is the theme of turning to, or trusting in, each other," said Tennille.

Tennille asked Cawood about the Outward Bound connection: "Indeed, it now appears that Professor Angelou wrote the poem in the presence of Robert Brown, a founding Trustee of the North Carolina Outward Bound School. If he has had a copy of [my] poem on display (which would not be surprising), is it not possible that she had seen it, perhaps many times?" Still stubbornly refusing to acknowledge the similarities of the works, Cawood fired another brusque letter off to Tennille, saying "I firmly believe there is NO similarity between 'Outward Bound' and 'On the Pulse of Morning.'" He concluded his letter by writing, "As Mr. Brown has suggested to you, I hope this matter is put to rest."

The *New York Post* and *Manchester Guardian* (Great Britain) published news stories about the December *Chronicles* article. Both papers attempted to talk to Angelou about the matter, but she refused to comment. Only after the *Guardian* story had gone to press did Angelou talk with its reporter, and when asked about the Tennille poem, she began singing black spirituals to him over the telephone.

In preparation for this update, I again contacted Angelou to get her feedback on the matter. Her secretary, who works out of an office in Angelou's large Winston-Salem home, agreed to ask Angelou about the Tennille poem. After I was placed on hold for over five minutes, the secretary returned to the telephone and informed me, "Dr. Angelou has decided not to grant you an interview."

I followed up with a written request to Angelou for information:

> I was informed this morning by Ms. Langston, of your office, that after she conferred with you about the Tennille poem, your position was that you had not seen it prior to today. This seems curious in light of the fact that Mr. Tennille's poem has been sent to you on several occasions: once personally, then via Certified Mail to your publisher, Random House, and again via Certified Mail through your employer, Wake Forest University, in care of President Thomas K. Hearn, Jr. In addition, Samuel T. Gladding, Assistant to the President for Special Projects at Wake Forest, has indicated that he personally gave you a copy of Mr. Tennille's poem. Further, I know that your publicist, Bob Brown, of B&C Associates, has shared Mr. Tennille's poem with one or more persons outside his firm, and it would seem exceedingly unlikely that Mr. Brown would share this most sensitive information with outsiders, and leave you "out of the loop."
>
> Obviously, the circumstantial evidence points to one of the following two conclusions: either you were mistaken in reporting to Ms. Langston that you had not seen the poem prior to today or you are now attempting to conceal your prior familiarity with Mr. Tennille's poem (which suggests its own conclusions in turn). Because the most important thing for me to achieve is the truth, I once again invite you to contact me with any information you care to share that would shed light on which of these is the true conclusion.

Not unlike Norman Tennille, I still await a response.

While a cynic could easily argue that the actions of Angelou and those closest to her have been in keeping with the duplicity and artifice that have become so characteristic of Angelou's life, he would be missing the more important moral of this story. The diversity that supposedly comes from race and gender means very little. Angelou was celebrated for bringing unparalleled vision and insight to the inauguration, something a white male like Robert Frost was supposedly incapable of offering. Maya Angelou wrote a poem that essentially expresses the same sentiments and uses the same structure and imagery, save her gratuitous politically correct references to ethnic groups, the environment, homosexuals, and greedy capitalists, as the poem Norton Tennille—a white male—wrote almost ten years earlier.

John Meroney, Jr., a founder of The Wake Forest Critic, *is a writer who divides his time between Los Angeles and Winston-Salem, North Carolina.*

The Rock 'n' Roll Paradox

by Todd Seavey

I was delighted in the fall of 1992 to discover a new VJ on MTV, named Kennedy, who declared herself a Republican during her first week on the air under friendly questioning from a fellow VJ. Asked whom she was voting for, she said "Bush/Quayle" with a smile—she was proud not only of the Bush part,

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mind you, but even of the Quayle part. The other VJ, the scruffy and annoying Steve Isaacs, looked startled and abandoned the subject of politics.

But it was too late. I had to know how this Republican had found herself on America's decadent and painfully liberal/Green/multiculturalist network—where, I should note, she's done a swell job and been the most energetic and zany of all MTV's jockeys, without grating on the nerves (lacerating the spinal cord might be more apt) the way other would-be lovable MTV personalities like Pauly Shore do. I was pained to discover she won "Worst VJ" in *Rolling Stone*'s annual readers' poll, but I take this to be simply another sign of the depravity of our times.

I spoke briefly with Kennedy, and she confided that she: one, bears a tattoo of an elephant; two, has a big crush on Dan Quayle; three, possesses a treasured audio tape of Quayle telling her she looks great in purple (and that she "rocks") from her days as a DJ in Oregon—where her dad, by the way, is a Democrat; four, has never heard of *National Review* (I didn't ask about *Chronicles*); and five, fears that most conservatives are boring and fall into the rationalist trap of thinking "right-wing means left-brain," the left side of the brain supposedly being the logical hemisphere.

The next time I saw Kennedy on the air, she was wearing a fetching costume by Jean-Paul Gaultier (who has created outfits for Madonna), wielding a whip, counting to ten in German, enthusiastically introducing a "Blocktoberfest" of Guns n' Roses videos (telling Axl Rose that if he's out there watching, he's a pal), and ripping up a picture of Sinead O'Connor while telling viewers to "fight the real enemy" in a parody of Sinead's Pope-shredding faux pas. The most exciting thing the other VJs do is ask us to recycle aluminum.

Clearly, Kennedy is a valuable asset in the Ongoing Struggle no matter how zany she is. But alas, she is one oasis in a desert of liberalism. Perhaps, though, that's the way the public wants it. MTV may be produced by the liberal pseudo-intelligentsia, but you'd better believe they're doing their darnedest to give mainstream America what it wants, messianic recycling ads and all. Indeed, at the same time it's imparting liberal political messages, MTV is the very embodiment of planet-spanning postmodern capitalism, doing a wonderful and profitable job of giving us mindless, politically apathetic consumers the entertainment we crave.

The leftism/capitalism paradox of MTV is one that exists in rock music itself. Rock and roll was the *bête noire* of 1950's social conservatives, but it also represents exactly the kind of creative, life-affirming, postmodern, and highly profitable energy that leftist social engineers can't hope to control (or to replicate through the National Endowment for the Arts). Rock's individualist-populist attitude is inherently nonleftist even when the songs themselves contain leftist sentiments—though it's more exciting when one stumbles across explicitly conservative rock lyrics, such as Jesus Jones' celebration of the collapse of communism, "Right Here, Right Now"—complete with a nod to Francis Fukuyama: "Right here, right now / There's no other place I'd rather be / Right here, right now / Watching the world wake up from history."

Other explicitly nonliberal pieces of rock history include Oingo Boingo's denunciation of soft-on-crime liberalism, "Only a Lad"; Duran Duran's anti-socialist revolution song, "New Moon on Monday" (that's what they say it is, anyway—and as an early-80's New Wave band they definitely represented a union of capitalist flash and pop culture free-spiritedness that would have been considered contradictory by the hippies of a decade earlier); dance band KLF's references to libertarian science-fiction writer Robert Anton Wilson; numerous songs by Rush (who are Canadian Ayn Rand fans); and the much-maligned Guns n' Roses, who should get an award for being the first rock group to criticize the Maoist Shining Path of Peru (in their song "Civil War," which quotes an eerie proclamation of war from a Shining Path general).

No less a rock star than Mick Jagger praised economist Friedrich Hayek and free markets in what may have been a self-written line of dialogue on *Saturday Night Live*. Like many rock stars, he and the Rolling Stones came to the United States in part to escape the excessive taxes of a moderately socialist England. What could be more in keeping with the spirit of the American Revolution than that?

But even if a rocker is singing about deadly ozone holes and the joys of casual sex, every time a scruffy, long-haired kid strikes it rich by entertaining the American populace, it has to be seen as some sort of victory for the American dream. Like Hollywood movies, rock and roll is recognized the world over as a distinctly American invention—defiant, fun, eternally new and youthful, like the young Republic itself.

It is no small thing for one nation to put its indelible stamp on a medium that may influence all the other cultures of the Earth for centuries to come. It is a benign and bloodless conquest, like convincing all the world to speak your language or adopt your philosophy. In the long run, that counts for more than the passing liberal fads and unrealistic values to which rockers pay lip service. Conservatives, as proponents of American culture, should be thankful we have rock and roll.

And, of course, we have Kennedy. She remains something of an enigma, though. A paradox within a paradox, MTV's most conservative VJ hosts the network's strangest gig—the midnight progressive rock show, *Alternative Nation*. When I see it now, I'll regret the questions I didn't ask. I didn't really find out how much of a social conservative she is. For instance, would she put progressive rock video pioneer David Bowie in jail for sodomy (committed with Mick Jagger, according to Bowie's ex-wife and the new Jagger biography)? Does Kennedy think modern pop culture is inherently liberal? Is she religious? And finally, if God exists and sees everything and that includes MTV, does she think He enjoys it?

Todd Seavey writes from New York City.

For Dancers Only

by William H. Peterson

Remembering Swing

Bittersweet feelings swept over me, a child of swing, during a recent walk down Manhattan's Times Square after an absence of several decades. At the end of the walk (Broadway and 42nd Street) two other feelings emerged: there's a permanence in things notwithstanding change. And all of us are, inescapably, creatures of culture.

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I felt pain seeing the spot where the Strand Theater had been (where I had had the pleasure of seeing and hearing Artie Shaw, his clarinet and orchestra, play a dazzling arrangement of Cole Porter's "Begin the Beguine"). Pain seeing the location of the once-Loew's State Theater (where I had been transported into swing heaven by Duke Ellington, his piano, his orchestra, and the haunting blues of his "Mood Indigo"). And pain walking by the Paramount Building with its tacky street-front stores hawking tourist gimcracks and discount consumer wares. For gone is the big Paramount Theater, the glamour of a theater in which, it seemed, I practically grew up, with its grand marquee bespeaking of giants of the stripe of Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, Jimmie Lunceford, and Tommy Dorsey. In person! On stage!

And what a stage, as the first faint spine-tingling notes of the big band's theme music sounded—Goodman's "Let's Dance," Miller's "Sunrise Serenade," Lunceford's "Jazznocracy," Dorsey's "I'm Gettin' Sentimental Over You"—as the curtain parted, as up slowly out of nowhere rose the stage with the leader and his band into partial, then full and glorious view, as the ever-louder theme number reached a crescendo, as the audience, myself included, clapped and stomped when not (as at early-morning shows for an army of truant high schoolers) standing and screaming and then dancing and jiving in the aisles. Jitterbugs, the press labeled us.

Pain in not becoming a swing musician at age 16 came in 1937, when Mom discovered a pair of drumsticks in my bedroom closet. That night when Pop and Brother George, more than seven years my elder, got home from work there was the devil to pay. An explanation was demanded. Trapped, I confessed that, yes, I was taking private drum lessons from a professional musician at the Loew's Jersey City Building. How much a lesson, they wanted to know. Four dollars an hour, I replied, conceding, sure, it was a lot of money but proclaiming that the world needed another Gene Krupa or Lionel Hampton.

Mom declared me crazy in her native Swedish (the Swedes have four different words for crazy, and she used all four). "What's to become of him?" she asked, looking up, presumably to God. Pop said I should seek a more practical career. Brother George concurred. Close to tears, I agreed to drop the lessons and study harder at Dickinson High School.

Even so, high school pals saw how lost in swing I still was, as I clicked my fingers to some inaudible tune going around in my brain. They urged me to enter Deejay Martin Block's competition for student critics to review new swing records at WNEW's "Make-Believe Ballroom," a popular radio show with teens and other swing addicts in its day. My three-page application letter must have clicked, for I got to represent Dickinson High with a counterpart from Brooklyn High. That night I put Dickinson and Jersey City on the map. I was famous. Kids told me so the next day in class and in the hallways.

Once the great Jimmie Lunceford orchestra came to a Jersey City dance hall. Without a date I spent the entire evening at the bandstand, swaying to the rhythm, enthralled by great Sy Oliver arrangements like "Annie Laurie" and "For Dancers Only," collecting autographs from leader Lunceford and every band member. Jimmy Crawford, Lunceford's superb drummer, seemed to take a liking to the gawky swing-struck kid, winking at me as he pretended with puffed cheeks to blow a drumstick around and around, a stick he was spinning with his fingers. Wow!

Another coup came when I got a writing assignment—my first ever. It was from *Swing Magazine* to interview Duke Ellington at Harlem's Apollo Theater in 1941. Thrilled but rattled, I checked with my journalism professor at New York University (major economics, minor journalism). What do I ask? How do I know when the interview is over?

The easy part was taking in the show. It brought down the house with, according to my write-up (only four inches but with my proud signature-initials, WHP), "Creole Love Call," "Take the 'A' Train," and "Sophisticated Lady," with the lyrics sung by the lovely Ivy Anderson. After the show, I knocked nervously on the Duke's dressing-room door. How shocked I was at the closet-sized room but how charmed I was at the Duke's generosity, his famous smile and *joie de vivre*.

I tried not to act awestruck but plainly was, I recall, as I sat in the presence of this jazz immortal—swing's composer-pianist-arranger-leader extraordinaire (who composed some 3,000 orchestral pieces). Just like the reporters I had seen in the movies, I popped questions and made notes in a pocket-size notebook. I learned how, for example, trumpeter Cootie Williams helped devise the growl horn technique and earn an Ellington classic, "Concerto for Cootie," which evolved, with lyrics, into "Do Nothing 'til You Hear From Me." My eyes nearly popped at the sheer wonder of such Ellingtonia and at the Master himself. The Duke took it all in graciously, and as we stood up he thanked me. Me? I mumbled appreciation. Back on 125th Street, story in hand, I jumped for joy. What a triumph at age 20!

Things changed in 1942. Painfully. It was the beginning of the end of swing, though I didn't realize it at the time. Vocalists like Frank Sinatra and Perry Como began to overshadow the big bands. Giants like Glenn Miller and Claude Thornhill along with millions of fans went into uniform. Gasoline rationing shut down top dance spots like New Jersey's Meadowbrook and New York's Glen Island Casino. A two-year musicians' strike against the record industry also hurt. Swing never quite recovered even with a bit of a comeback after the war. Instead, something called rock came along. An era had ended.

They say nothing is forever. Swing tells me otherwise. Sure, life is irreversible and Heraclitus was wise in saying that only change endures, that you can never swim in the same river twice. But living is experience and the mind can freeze experience into memory, forever if you let it.

Sic transit gloria mundi. To my way of thinking, swing's more than a phase of jazz history, a culture past; it's part of my life and I'm part of it. Still. How well I recollect swing drummer Jimmy Crawford throwing that wink my way more than a half-century ago.

Recollections, nostalgia, the past becomes the present and future. Youth. Swing. Bliss. Lost and found. Forever. Partly thanks to the genius of records, CDs, and audio cassettes. Mostly thanks to memories that light up the years of long ago. As a Fred Astaire-Ira Gershwin movie lyric puts it: No, no, they can't take that away from me.

William H. Peterson is an adjunct scholar at the Heritage Foundation.

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Tiger, *Tigre*

by John Lukacs

The Perils of Translation

In November 1875, in a gas-lit flat over a rain-soaked street in Tours, a law student sat together with a young Portuguese widow. They were rifling through her letters. She had been a minor actress in Bordeaux and had played at the Haymarket Theatre and elsewhere. She had had an English lover who once gave her an anthology of poems. "*Regarde, c'est vraiment bien,*" she said, pronouncing it *vrai-mon*, and she went on to read with her Portuguese accent and voice:

Tiger, tiger burning bright
In the forest of the night
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful
symmetry?

The young Frenchman, who knew some English, was charmed with this, and right then and there the result was the following:

Tigre féroce, aux yeux de charbon
Brûlant et hurlant dans la forêt
nocturne
Quel grand chasseur, quel petit
peintre
Encadreraient ta logique fière?

"*Grand*" *chasseur* and "*petit*" *peintre* reflected the kind of royalist anti-intellectualism that this law student fancied *circa* 1875, but "*logique fière*" for "fearful symmetry" was the inevitable intrusion of the Cartesian spirit.

Two decades passed. Our young Frenchman had inherited of a modest fortune, wherewith he bought himself a seat in the *département* of Ile-et-Vilaine and even had a small volume of verse published by the title of *Essais parnassiens*, all of which gave him a mildly sophisticated reputation in the provincial town where he lived. His subsequent destiny interests us no more. What concerns us is the fact that on a bright summer day in 1894 *Essais parnassiens* was picked up on the Quai Voltaire by Alistair Constant, an aspiring young habitué of the Café Royal circle, fresh out from the occasionally strawberries-and-champagne world of Oxford and hopeful of appearing in print in the *Orange Book*, which was to be launched in the autumn of that year. Alistair had just received this telegram from Oscar: "DEAR BOY. ANY ENGLISH POEM WILL DO AS LONG AS IT IS IN FRENCH." Whereafter Alistair composed:

Fiery orange, tiger lily
Crying high for you to see
Defying the trampling hunter
How small your logic seems to
me.

A smallish little thing. There occurred now the Entente Cordiale and, in consequence, a rise in the interest devoted to English literature, including the one-time, for Frenchmen, incomprehensible field of English poesy. Aristide Enjalbert, who found the first (and only) number of the *Orange Book* in the Reading Circle of Pau, dreamed of the strange and savage feline beauty of Paris in the night: images of *La Dame aux Camélias* and of the eventual odor of leather and gasoline fumes swept through his head. By 1910, the Baudelaire spirit had arrived even in the Midi:

O belle tigresse, féroce et ivre
Arpentes trottoirs dans la
métropole de nuit
Toujours dédaignant tes chasseurs
philistins
Ta logique ne cache qu'un noble
ennui.

In 1925, Fitzgerald Ashby, *aet.* 25, possessor of a yearly income of $25,000, comes to Paris:

Wind-drunk swaying poplar trees
Rumble on the roof of France
Their geometric carpentries
Ignore the thick-lipped tourists'
dance.

He had been careening southward in a red Hispano driven by Caresse Crosby. The trip was not a success. In the Pyrenees it rained. Fitzgerald Ashby had his usual trouble with "*chasseurs*" and "*chaussures*"; from "*arpentant*" he slipped into "carpentry"; still he felt that he had understood philistinism perfectly. This came through clear and strong to all readers of the *Left Bank Review*, where Jean-Luc Boîteux found the poem in 1938. Boîteux was a cultural pessimist, an adherent of the Front Populaire, an admirer of the American New Deal. Hence his, probably unconscious, translation of poplars into peoples:

La Fraîcheur des aubes des jeunes
peuples sérieux
Pénètre les toits qui cachent les
joueurs,
Ils subissent l'assaut des odeurs
nocturnes
Encombrant leurs grands et
dynamiques fureurs.

One world war and nearly three decades later a tired American, sitting in a café in Tours, saw a cartoon in an American newspaper. A seedy tiger, wearing a two-star kepi, unmistakably equipped with the form and gait of General de Gaulle, was trying to pull an old army tank on which was written "Europe." The "*assaut*" suddenly rang in his ear, as he remembered the theme from a jingle contest sponsored by a gasoline company:

Happy Hank was an earnest Yank
Unlike his good friend, Fancy
Frank
He followed Esso's good advice
He put *his* tiger in the tank.

John Lukacs is a professor of history at Chestnut Hill College in Pennsylvania.

LIBERAL ARTS

SOMETHING NEW?

"The new ideal of the radical left: The United States. The U.S. used to be a bulwark against communism, but today it's the experimental laboratory of the radical left, the last country where you can still meet radical socialist ideas among people influencing the society. The term 'political correctness' includes a lot of views on ethnical minorities, business, environment, culture, feminism and gays that makes the United States an odd participant in the international society."

—*from* Contra, *a right-wing Swedish political magazine, January 1994.*

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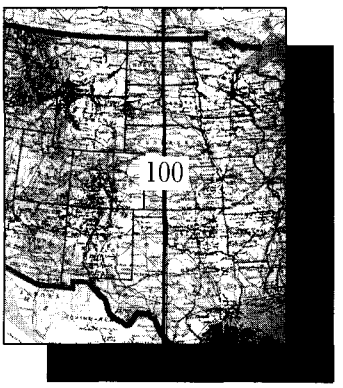
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Present for the Duration



Kemmerer, Wyoming: Population 3,500, more or less; throw in another thousand or so for Frontier and Diamondville, the three together making Greater Kemmerer. Five churches, two Mormon stake houses. The Lincoln County Courthouse and the Lincoln County Law Enforcement Facility (late 20th-century term meaning Sheriff's Office). Five motels, two supermarkets and an ALCO store, five restaurants (not including fast-food joints), seven bars. Archie Neil Park, the Kemmerer Field Club and golf course. The Lincoln County Library and the Frontier Museum. No art gallery, no symphony orchestra or string quartet, no ballet, no movie theater, no research library, no bookstore even. A stripped-down existence, you might say. I'd rather be dead (others have suggested). Nevertheless, I like it—in fact I flourish—here.

"Why would you want to live in *Wyoming*?" the horrified editor of a prominent neoconservative journal asked me about a decade ago. "Don't you like people?" a learned professor inquired at a literary conference in Jackson, Wyoming, last spring. In spite of my unconsidered reply ("Not much"), the truth is that I do of course like people, in particular those of the female persuasion. But I do not care for large concentrations of people, and I am even less fond of the sort of environment that modern people in large numbers create for themselves and seem to enjoy. For one thing, these environments—called "cities" or "suburbs"—are human and aesthetic disasters, designed primarily for a more abundant life for the machines that inhabit them and only secondarily for the flesh-and-blood robots that operate the machines; for another, I prefer a setting where the natural rather than the manmade world is the dominating inescapable presence. Not just do men and women seem to be most themselves living in small communities adrift in natural space, they appear to appreciate each other better too. Cities were good enough things in centuries past when they were, at least by comparison with the megalopoli of the present age, relatively small, and even more so when enclosed by walls that prevented them from metastasizing like cancers. But at some point in the 20th century cities ceased being centers of learning, the arts, and even trade—or perhaps it is fairer to say that learning and the arts virtually ceased to exist, while the objects of trade became humanly worthless, consumerist baubles produced by the greedy for the stupid, the ignorant, the lazy, and the depraved. Unhappily, coincident with these developments municipalities degenerated into command centers for an imperialistic modernism whose aim is to make over the provinces and hinterlands it despises as "provincial" (what else?) and "unprogressive." It is possible that finally they will not succeed in the endeavor, since living in Kemmerer, Wyoming, or in Magdalena, New Mexico, or in Wolf Hole, Arizona, in the 1990's often seems comparable to watching from a lifeboat at a safe distance as the *Titanic* goes down. These are times for prudent and thoughtful men to position themselves a little beyond the maelstrom, for perspective's sake as well as security's. And to keep their powder dry. Probably freedom has less to do with constitutions, bills of rights, an independent judiciary, free markets, and free speech—all of which can be repealed by the stroke of a pen—than with living far out on the edge of things where you're hard to find and keeping a sidearm handy. Not that it helped Randy Weaver much.

I suppose life in a small mining town in western Wyoming must have its limitations, though for me they are so slight or so little galling that I ceased to be aware of them many years ago. No art gallery means Robert Mapplethorpe exhibits don't visit here, while looking at landscape paintings in Wyoming is like examining Botticellis at the Chicken Ranch. Movies are the Enemy, and television, for which you need a cable hookup costing $25 a month in Kemmerer, is an even greater enemy. (I don't have any hookup; writers ought to economize.) Needless to say, for such minor privations outweighing compensations exist, or I wouldn't be here.

The first of these is exactly that provincialism so repugnant to all American moderns, in particular Easterners, Californians, and moderns everywhere—including in the provinces. Provincialism, so far from representing human existence tragically blighted, is actually its fullest realization; in Mexico it is symbolized by the Tree of Life, a gaudy ceramic work in the form of a spreading tree whose branches are filled with human figures (including Christian saints), birds, butterflies, and other creatures. Unlike megalopolitan life, the life of the provinces blends forms and levels of human experience that in cities either do not exist or else are sharply stratified, including a familiarity with nature and with natural forces, with animals, and with a variety of human types directly shaped by natural reality and mutually dependent upon one another, both economically and socially. Even at this advanced date, the artificial life is largely a construction of the suburbs and the cities, and if it is still worth living, it is hardly worth examining, as recent American "literature" suggests.

Unlike the first, the second compensation is almost exclusively every native Westerner's birthright, the fundamental ground and condition of existence throughout the Rocky Mountain region: I mean *space*, of course, space enough to allow a man ten square miles to back a pickup truck around in, if he wants or feels he needs it. The spaciousness of the West is a thing that non-Westerners can never imagine but only experience, and often enough it produces an overpowering sense of loneliness if it doesn't scare them almost to death. The tourists call it emptiness—an emptiness enhanced by the nakedness of the gigantic landforms, treeless between the mountain ranges and cedar breaks and cov-

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ered by only the thinnest layer of soil, if by any. And above and beyond the land itself is the sky, where the cloud formations approximate the underlying terrain with an amazing correspondence similar to ethereal reflection and five or six different weather systems transpire together. When Jim Bridger, after a life of trapping and exploring in the Mountain West, recalled from the west-facing porch of a Kansas City boardinghouse how it had been possible to "see forever" in that country, he anticipated Walker Percy who, convalescing from tuberculosis in New Mexico almost a century later, marveled at what he termed the "pure possibility" of the West—a state of mind that, for those susceptible to its allure, swiftly becomes nearly as indispensable to the spirit as air is to the body. And in a formerly wide-open continent where space is increasingly constricted, this openness—compounded in the social structure and identity of the American West—is more and more at a premium.

After a century and a half, the temptation to glamorize life in the West persists even though the glamour never existed outside the imaginations of non-Western observers—perhaps it is more accurate to say that the glamour of the West is and always has been an absence of glamour epitomized by the strenuous workaday existence of the frontier, relieved slightly by imported Eastern fashions and amusements. At one level contemporary Western culture, informed by the national television and radio networks and shaped by the sound studios of Nashville and the Hollywood producers and scriptwriters, is indistinguishable from that of the rest of the United States. Modernity has established a beachhead here, even if for the time being at least it is mainly restricted to the educational establishment, the welfare bureaucracy, and the media—the only havens in the Republican Rockies for our homegrown moderns, who take their cues from the National Organization for Women and the Clinton administration while remaining, like modernists everywhere, blissfully ignorant that modernism for most of this century has been the fundamental instinct of the American middle class to whom they consider themselves superior. At other levels, however, the West trails the national culture by several generations, a lag that is probably attributable to its closeness to nature, its pre-postindustrial and agricultural labor force, and its sparse population. The average Westerner—man, woman, or adolescent—knows how to break and ride a horse, handle a rifle competently, track, shoot, and butcher an elk, fell a tree with a chain saw, build a house, repair an engine, make fence, and construct a wilderness camp, as well as how to treat his neighbor. (Last summer a man ran his car off a typically lonely stretch of highway in Wyoming and waited until two men in a pickup truck offered him a lift to the nearest town. He accepted their offer and drew a gun on them several miles down the road, shot them to death, robbed the corpses, and stole the truck. In a region where many states have mandatory good Samaritan laws on the books in recognition of the perennial hazards of severe weather, inhospitable terrain, and remoteness from human habitation, such a betrayal of common trust is the West's unpardonable sin.) Glamorous or not, Western life continues to reflect a kind of reality that has been almost completely expunged from the thoroughly modernized portions of North America.

Socially speaking, of course, the American West is no more than the sum of the rest of the country, transported crumb by earthy crumb in the bootsoles of pioneers from the pine forests of New England, the mountain slopes of Tennessee, the Mississippi bottomlands, and the rich black prairies of Indiana. If the Westerner really exists as a type it is a type of character he represents, not a type of culture or even an amalgamation of cultures. Marc Reisner, in his superb history of water policy in the American West, *Cadillac Desert*, speculates that the mountain men who were the first white explorers of the region discouraged rather than encouraged its settlement by their subsequent tales of adventure: "You could live off the land in better years, but the life of a trapper, a hunter, a fortune seeker—the only type of life that seemed possible in the West—was not what the vast majority of Americans sought." Nor is Western life—the thing itself, not the life of Vail or Jackson or Santa Fe—what the majority of modern Americans want, as opposed to most Westerners who do not make their homes in places like Rangely, Colorado, Moab, Utah, Kemmerer, Wyoming, or Great Falls, Montana because some giant corporation based in Houston sent them there.

The typical man or woman of the Rocky Mountain West, though not opposed to "progress" and appreciative of the goods and creature comforts that "progress" supplies, retains a commitment to an ideal that "progress" directly opposes and threatens. Call it hypocrisy, call it naive romanticism, call it have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too: the fact is that when the West, challenged by the assault of the Clinton people, promises to fight rather than surrender its accustomed style of living, its protests ring true in a way that similar declarations from other parts of the country—California, for instance, or the South—do not. Westerners are indeed Americans and, being Americans, are "progressives," but they are not moderns and are likely to become less modern in the foreseeable future, under pressure. As Americans they continue to welcome capital from outside the region as well as the contributions newcomers make to the local tax base; as Westerners they are made nervous by the arrival of strangers with their epicene manners and clothes, their determination to gentrify traditional folkways and practices, and their half-hope that the bust phase routinely succeeding the Western boom will send them packing back where they came from. Though such ambiguity is obviously not restricted to the West, it does seem to run deeper here than elsewhere, while—so far, anyway—modern attitudes have not succeeded in prevailing over traditional ones as they have in the rest of the United States.

This state of affairs may not last, of course. The South has its tragic past; the West may well have its tragic future. Then again, it may not. "You can't stop progress" is a hoary American saying to which the vast majority of Americans still subscribe. But progress can stop progress and probably will, sooner or later; and if we in the Rocky Mountain West are fortunate (we have been quite fortunate for a century and a half now), the huge humming dynamo that Henry Adams despised will run down before our unique high-country civilization is totally destroyed. It is something to pray for, and if prayer doesn't work, there are other means available. Until then, the West remains a place dedicated to the proposition that all men are not created modern. As long as it remains so, my fellow Westerners and I are here for the duration. And maybe even beyond. Where, after all, would we go? c

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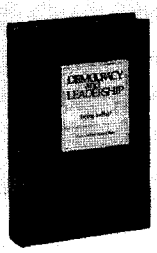

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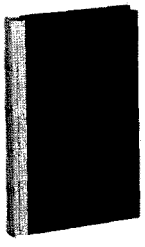

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